

**Partial Transcription of Stamford Board of Representatives  
Transportation Committee Meeting  
December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016 at 7:00 PM**

**Link to video of meeting:**

[http://cityofstamford.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view\\_id=14&clip\\_id=5468](http://cityofstamford.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=14&clip_id=5468)

**Vice-Chair Rodney Pratt:** Good evening, everybody. Today is Thursday, December 1<sup>st</sup>. We're in the Republican Caucus Room, and the meeting will start at 7:02. We have three items on the agenda tonight, one of which we'll take up under the suspension of the rules, and we'll start with Item 1, T29.061: "Review status of application with State of Connecticut for Traffic Light on High Ridge at Bradley Place/Donata." Robert Zaitooni is here to speak on that.

**Traffic Engineer Robert Zaitooni:** Yes, sir... We had submitted a signal warrant analysis to the State of Connecticut for the intersection of Bradley, Donata Lane, and High Ridge. The State Office of Transportation Administration denied the request, meaning that they will not authorize a signal at that location at this time.

**Vice-Chair Pratt:** OK. Matt, this is one of your items—would you like to speak on that?

**Representative Matt Quinones:** Yes. Thank you, first of all, to the Committee for allowing this to be on your agenda tonight, and thank you for attending. The reason why we put this on (I'll speak for my co-rep for District 16, Steve Kolenberg) was—this has been a reoccurring item that's been a concern of a lot of the constituents in District 16, in terms of a light being put on Donata and Bradley Place, and there is a significant amount of those who live in that area who do not want to see that. And I was under the impression that, a year ago, that this was put in front of the Department of Transportation at the State level and denied. So when there was a new application, and (excuse me) from that point, there was also a development that was going through the Zoning Board of Appeals, in which that same light was to be contingent on that, even after it was denied by the State. That was turned down by the Zoning Board of Appeals with a lot of opposition from the neighborhood, as well. Following that, I believe, this was also put on...during our vote on the budget, allocations for this signal to be in, as well. I can read the minutes...there are minutes from it. Anyway, I made the motion, so that's why I recall it from the budget, to remove that language. It was approved unanimously to be cut—not the funding, but the language that allowed for the signal allocation to go toward the Donata Lane and Bradley Place light. All of that transpired, and then, only to see it again go in front of the State...I was curious, and I won't speak for Representative Kolenberg, but I believe he was also curious...to see this come back from the State—to see another proposal. So I was wondering, now that this has been denied, and also the denial from the Department of Transportation being approved by OSTA: is this the last that we're going to see of this?

**Traffic Engineer Zaitooni:** Let me correct some facts that are not correct. First of all, when we first submitted that, the Department of Transportation did not deny it (this was a year ago); they just had questions, so they sent it back for corrections. So, at that time, Mani Poola had collected additional data, sent it back in, and they started reviewing it again. So this went back and forth three times. I did not place any item on any budget for signalization at this intersection. I did not,

and Josh did not. This item relates to the original Nagi development, that he had contributed \$100,000 towards a traffic signal at Bradley. So that money may be the one that you're referring to. Now, I would have to check the record, because I don't recall either Josh or myself placing any in the budget at that time. Because, first of all, we weren't sure how the Department of Transportation was going to respond. Now, the other fact is that, when ZBA denied Ahuja's (the Ahuja's across the street, alongside Donata) development, their development had no relationship to the signal. The signal warrant is for the main street, which is High Ridge Road, and the highest of the two side streets—the highest is Bradley. So they had no impact on the analysis whatsoever. So Ahuja is still trying to get his development approved through the Planning Board. We have no part on this. We finally sent the data to the DOT, and we asked them, "Once and for all, tell me—what you want to do?" And they said, "Not enough traffic—denied." So I have the denial. Originally a year ago, it was not denied—they just had questions, and on and on. Now, I would like to see the records of what you're referring to as budget, because we did not place a budget item in the budget. There is a contribution—a sizeable contribution—from Nagi Jewelers, because they had the original development there. I believe it was the sum of \$100,000—now, I'm going off of the information that I've been in the past—that will have to most likely be paid back to them. And that may be the item you're referring to. So we will have to check it.

**Vice-Chair Pratt:** Monica?

**Representative Monica Di Costanzo:** I'll defer to Matt....

**Representative Quinones:** These are the minutes from our... First, let me say that, if it was kicked back for corrections a year ago or denied, I apologize. I don't have that in front of me, so I don't have the exact thing. But, relevant to my ultimate question: is this going to be the last time we're going to see this in front of them? But first, let me clarify for the record what was said for the Special Budget Meeting. This was on Monday, May 9, 2016 at 7 PM. At that point, myself (District Representative 16) asked the President to make a motion referring to the City project listed in the Capital [Project] Book Page 95 as City Project C56174, Citywide Signals...

**Traffic Engineer Zaitooni:** That has nothing to do with Bradley, sir...

**Representative Quinones:** If I can finish?

**Representative Di Costanzo:** Yes, let him...

**Representative Quinones:** [reading his motion from the May 9<sup>th</sup> minutes] "The motion I'd like to make is to remove the language underneath 'Reasons for Project' to include a new signal at High Ridge Road at Bradley Place." There was a second from Representative Gabe DeLuca—the motion was seconded. I went on for remarks justifying my motion. Representative Kolenberg also made remarks concurring with mine. There were no further speakers. The President asked to try it on a voice vote. It was then passed unanimously.

**Traffic Engineer Zaitooni:** It said "Citywide Signals," and there are a whole bunch of items that...

**Representative Quinones:** Correct.

**Traffic Engineer Zaitooni:** And one of them was Bradley in there?

**Representative Quinones:** Correct.

**Traffic Engineer Zaitooni:** I stand corrected.

**Representative Quinones:** So—and [that was] really not the point of the discussion—I want to know, to the best of your knowledge, is the City going to be continuing to try to get a light at that intersection?

**Traffic Engineer Zaitooni:** Not at all. We have no intent... We always try, if there is a safety issue...if tomorrow there are a few crashes that are correctable by a signal, I can tell you that I will try. But if there is no issue related to that intersection, we have no reason to change that.

**Representative Quinones:** And the reason has been, so far, that there's been money secured from the Nagi project that you're trying to satisfy to be able to utilize that \$100,000?

**Traffic Engineer Zaitooni:** No, honestly—I did not start the process.

**Representative Quinones:** Sure. But, to the best of your knowledge...I understand that you're stepping into this.

**Traffic Engineer Zaitooni:** The intersection minimally met the warrant. What happened was—if you want to get into the weeds, we can do that—what happened was that, at one time, the intersection of Bradley had only one outbound lane...okay? Somewhere along the line, it was changed to two outbound lanes. There's a left-turn lane and a right-turn lane. That, by itself, makes it a two-lane approach for warrants. If it's a one-lane approach, it meets. If it's a two-lane approach, it does not meet. So the whole idea was, because we had pressures from the development community to do this, we wanted OSTA [DOT's Office of State Traffic Administration] to make the decision, because it is their road. And they did make a decision. I have no reason to go ask for a signal. I've told my staff, "This is the end for us." Unless there is a good safety issue that I have to go address (and I do that on a daily basis). But I have no intention of pursuing it.

**Representative Quinones:** Okay. Well, thank you for your time, and for the Committee's time, taking up this item.

**Representative Carl Franzetti:** Not only does this traffic light impact Matt's and Kolenberg's district, it impacts Gabe and I in the 14<sup>th</sup> District, because this all bleeds together on High Ridge Road. Our concern, too, is the sprawl on High Ridge Road. Initially, it was supposed to stop at Merriman. Then it starts sprawling down, then Nagi started building, now across the street they want to start building. The residents don't want this. The residents spoke loud and clear on this, and they speak to their representatives, and we speak to the Zoning Board, the Planning Board, and everybody else. So I think that's what we're doing here tonight. We're speaking to you,

saying “Our constituents don’t want any more sprawl. They don’t want any more traffic lights on the road. And I don’t know how else to explain that. I’ve also explained it to a couple of my friends on the Planning Board. I said, “The Mayor appoints you, you come before the Appointments Committee, and we put you on there. If you’re not going to start listening to what our constituents say, maybe we’re not going to put you back there. And I think that’s been the problem in the City lately: the Boards have taken off on their own, without listening to the Board of Reps and to their constituents. So I just want to make it really clear, to follow up on what Matt’s saying: We don’t want to hear about this light anymore.

**Traffic Engineer Zaitooni:** Listen, I’ve just explained what it is: I do not control urban sprawl—I only react to it. My job is reactionary to what they put on the street. So I don’t have control over that. However, the only reason a traffic signal is warranted is either it meets the volume, or there is a bad safety issue. I do not want any of this to be mistaken for—if tomorrow there are crashes at Bradley, Donata, High Ridge—that Bob Zaitooni said he is not going to pursue it. I will pursue it. I have to. That’s my job. Because it’s [for] the safety of the public. I just want to be clear: I don’t control the sprawl. You may be absolutely right. I just have to do, very narrowly, to define what the safety and efficiency is on the road. And you’re correct to talk to the Planning Board and the Zoning Board, because they’re the ones that control it. None of us, the staff, can.

**Representative Franzetti:** And I thank you for saying that, and I think I’m going to end it now. But if you do have any plans of putting a light there in the future, I’d certainly appreciate if you would let the district reps know, not where we have to find out about it second-hand.

**Traffic Engineer Zaitooni:** Absolutely. We just received this denial a few days ago from OSTA, and I have let the Director of Operations know, and I informed him that I will contact the district representatives. So that’s what’s happening with that project.

**Vice-Chair Pratt:** Alright...Monica?

**Representative Di Costanzo:** I’m going to ask it...a point of clarification, because it was mentioned: \$100,000 that was for this light, for the development...the Nagi development—it was received from Nagi?

**Traffic Engineer Zaitooni:** Yes.

**Representative Di Costanzo:** Specifically for this light?

**Traffic Engineer Zaitooni:** You know, I recall...my recollection from what I have read...it was mostly for the signal, but it also said other safety improvements. But I would have to pull the records and read them again. And we did check them out, and it was partly for the signal. And that’s not sufficient for a signal—a signal costs about \$300,000. So the \$100,000 by itself doesn’t do anything.

**Representative Di Costanzo:** So...comments...that...if you could do that, if you could pull the information and get it back to the Board’s office for this Committee. Because I think it’s an

important point to make is that, with money floating out there, it leads to the belief, probably of some developers, that this is still on the table—that this can still, you know, that even, despite the denial, there's still wiggle room here. And I think we really need to look at that.

**Traffic Engineer Zaitooni:** Mister Nagi has called several times. He wants his money back.

**Representative Di Costanzo:** And that's fair enough....

**Traffic Engineer Zaitooni:** Again, to be quite clear, \$100,000 does not build you a signal.

**Vice-Chair Pratt:** Representative Patterson?

**Representative Denis Patterson:** Piggy-backing on what you're saying—are there any improvements in that immediate area, such as sidewalks and things like that, that we could conceivably make a case for using that money to form?

**Traffic Engineer Zaitooni:** On High Ridge Road, we have an elaborate plan to add bike lanes. And it was about 2.7 miles of bike lanes. And we had got permission from DOT to narrow the lanes down a foot or so and gain a five-foot bike lane on either side of High Ridge Road. So, yeah, for the safety of the bicyclists, it is. We had some funding for that project, but unfortunately, it hasn't been bonded, and it won't be bonded until next year.

**Representative Patterson:** Is there anything else that could be done in terms of sidewalks, or anything like that?

**Traffic Engineer Zaitooni:** On High Ridge Road...I think on High Ridge Road, you're pretty much set. There are...I would have to investigate. We typically try, that because it's a State road, most of the funding comes from them. We look for opportunities to make it safer, like the Trader Joe's signal, or Square Acre. We installed equipment to make it safer, because there were several very severe accidents coming out of the shopping center.

**Representative Patterson:** Could some of that money be used to synchronize the traffic lights on High Ridge Road?

**Traffic Engineer Zaitooni:** I do not believe that money can be used for those. These were development contributions for...the language, I have to check. Even if it says "safety," I think it specifically referred to that intersection.

**Vice-Chair Pratt:** I had a question for Matt and Carl: Do you representatives feel that you need alternative safety measures in that area? I get my hair cut up there, and it's always kind of a mess.

**Representative Quinones:** I would say that you're probably right. Without professing that I'm an expert on this, that synchronizing is not going to allow you to use the funds that were contributed by Mr. Nagi. But I would say that synchronization is a huge problem in our district, and it probably leads to some pedestrian safety issues. I would also say that some of the areas

probably worth looking at...in terms of eliminating some right-on-reds, which also causes problems for some pedestrians crossing, because everyone can be “in the right” and someone can still get hit in a turn-right-on-red scenario, especially on Vine. So I would say pedestrian safety is definitely a concern of mine, and has been for some time. But I don’t want to go too far off your item, but I would say that, to encourage—since the bike lanes were brought up—perhaps reaching out to myself and Representative Kolenberg, and to Gabe, as well, and Representative Franzetti, to get a sense of what the folks who are in our neighborhoods feel about bike lanes, and maybe get some feedback—because I don’t believe that’s been done yet—before moving forward with a project, just as a good-faith effort.

**Traffic Engineer Zaitooni:** I think Representative Kolenberg was involved in some awareness campaigns regarding the bike lanes. You may want to ask him, because he was aware of it. He came to my office six months ago and asked about bike lanes and what the criteria are, and I got that under the guidelines from the DOT. So I think he knows about this specific project I’m referring to. And, at one time, the funds were authorized through our budget: \$150,000 was authorized to initiate the project, but it hasn’t been bonded. The authorization is there, it’s not bonded. I think what you want to probably speak with him on where is the money right now.

**Representative Quinones:** And I don’t want to take [this] up [on] your agenda, because this is off the....

**Traffic Engineer Zaitooni:** Just for clarification, there is a separate project—an optimization project—that is going to hit the entire city, including High Ridge Road. And that project was just, a few weeks ago, awarded to an engineering firm, and right now we’re going through the contract signing. Data collection will most likely start in January, and we will have a public-input portion, as well. So that’s the Mayor’s effort. I think you have heard him refer to this.

[Representative Quinones leaves to attend concurrent meeting in Democratic Caucus Room.]

**Vice-Chair Pratt:** Thank you, Matt. Carl?

**Representative Franzetti:** I think we can close this here, and if we want further on it, we can put another item in next month’s agenda, perhaps talking about High Ridge and Long Ridge synchronization.

**Vice-Chair Pratt:** I know for a fact that, when I go to get my hair cut, I can’t make a left-hand turn to cross the double line. I have to go all the way down past [Mrs. Green’s], market, pull into the parking lot, pull back out...it’s just one of about three or four places like that on High Ridge Road. Anyway, having said that, if there are no more questions, we’ll move on to Item 2....

*[end of discussion of Item 1]*