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April 30, 2010

For the record

To: The Intermodal Facility Planning Group
Re: Intermodal facility neighborhood session of April 30, 2010

I regret that I am unable to attend the neighborhood meeting to discuss the use of the Densmore Brickyard property for an intermodal transportation facility. I respectfully request that this letter be entered upon the record as a means to express my personal opinions and concerns.

I have thought extensively about this proposed concept but remain unclear about its ultimate purpose. I strongly concur with the Valley News Editorial entitled "Hub Politics" that discussed this lack of clarity. In an effort to try to clarify my own thinking, I considered a number of scenarios based upon my understanding of the current plan.

First, as proposed, the facility will have paved parking for several private bus companies such as Dartmouth Coach, Advance Transit and Vermont Transit. I do not believe that it is either the obligation or in the best interest of the Lebanon taxpayers to provide parking for private organizations whose business models should shoulder the burden of providing parking for their own patrons.

Next, I imagined myself as a resident of any one of the neighboring Upper Valley towns located north, south, east and west of Lebanon and tried to imagine different purposes for traveling to Lebanon by bus, car, train or airplane. In each of these scenarios, I found myself unable to see how the Densmore Brickyard proposal would cause me to stop at that particular site to transfer to another source of transportation to reach locations within Lebanon. My reasoning, particularly if I traveled by automobile, is that this site is already so close to the most common destinations that it offers very little incentive to park, get out of the car and proceed to a destination less than 1-2 miles away. If I were driving to 12-A, it would be just as easy to go where I want to go and eliminate the need to walk from a bus stop to the particular business I wanted to visit. If I were going to the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, the time and gas saved traveling from the Densmore property is negligible as compared to the inconvenience.

My next consideration was to view this facility from the perspective of a Lebanon or West Lebanon resident traveling within the city. Since I can board Advance Transit at any of a number of sites around the city, driving into the heart of Lebanon only to board a bus to go back out to a peripheral site within the city also makes no sense.

And finally, if I lived within or outside Lebanon and wanted to travel by bus, rail or plane, this site offers no greater convenience or incentive for me to drive to this site since parking is free and readily available at both the airport and the Amtrak station.

Additionally, I feel that the proposed location and function of this facility is being crafted to provide parking to meet the needs of private bus companies (whether for-profit or not-for-profit) and does not address the real needs of interconnecting all modes of

transportation. Individual bus companies should be responsible for building and maintaining their own parking facilities and this burden SHOULD NOT be the responsibility of we, the Lebanon residents and taxpayers.

I believe that Lebanon's greatest need, and greatest benefit to our current residents, is a way to link intercity travel to our city-owned airport rather than to provide parking for bus companies.

I must also emphasize that the city has requested that the intermodal planning group investigate and present a "No-build-at-this-time" scenario. While this particular forum may not be the place for such a discussion, the public should be offered the chance to reject all current proposals in favor of a more integrated proposal that better links air, rail, automobile and bus service.

In the meantime, I believe:

1. that it is incumbent upon Dartmouth Coach to use its own land or to acquire land to build either a parking garage or additional paved parking if that is their need.
2. that the previously proposed site in WRJ should be strongly reconsidered as this will provide Vermont Transit and the Amtrak station with closer and more logical facilities to promote the use of rail or bus travel along with relatively easy access to the Lebanon Airport by interstate and
3. that the citizens of Lebanon be provided with a more integrated proposal with a clear purpose before we shoulder yet another burden for all of the towns that surround us.

Respectfully,

Lebanon Mayor Georgia A, Tuttle
City Councilor, Ward 1