

**Staley, Angelina**

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**Subject:**

FW: Letter to be read tonight

Dear Fellow Committee Members,

I apologize for my absence this evening. I am out of the country.

There are many reasons to vote against this bridge, and although I believe we owe it to the people of Stamford to urgently fix this vital piece of infrastructure, the question before you tonight is whether this contract is the correct way to do it.

From the beginning, there have been many red flags about this no-bid contract: misrepresentations about emergency vehicles, threats that funds would be rescinded without immediate action (which would exclude a reasonable period of time to receive public comments), the suggestion that this contract is the only plausible option for funding and such an option would not appear again for several years (despite research indicating that millions of dollars have already been received), a deep and unsettling cry from the West Side neighborhood stating that their needs are not being addressed, rationalizations that the high contract price is because of the historic nature of the bridge (while members of our own Stamford Historical Preservation society urge us to vote against it), and finally the way by which this contract has been presented.

For me, all the aforementioned issues are enough to vote against the contract alone; however, this correspondence is going to focus on the way the contract was presented to us.

Many have told me that my idealistic view of how government should be is unrealistic. Despite this, I believe that each of you became involved in municipal politics because you genuinely want to make our city a better place. It is for this reason that I urge you to vote against the contract.

There are too many unanswered questions remaining and too much pressure to blindly support this contract despite these unresolved issues. When critical questions were asked at both the Board of Finance and Operations meetings last month, those questions were not answered and members were told that the money would not be there if they did not vote immediately in favor. In addition, we were told that the bridge was so dangerous that the city didn't have time to request multiple bids. However, when we further pressed the issue, we were told that the bridge is currently safe for pedestrians. Even though our engineering department clearly stated that the contract was for a pedestrian-only bridge, a BOR 2008 resolution was discovered which stated that the bridge was meant to be able to accommodate emergency vehicles. When board members pointed out the discrepancy they were told that the bridge does allow emergency vehicles even though the contract doesn't explicitly say it. When that explanation was rightfully questioned a new "revised" contract has surfaced at the eleventh hour that now includes accommodations for emergency vehicles.

My question to you is this: do you believe that this is the way good and effective government operates? Do you believe that this environment is conducive to thoughtful and informed decision making? Or do you believe, like me, that decisions that will affect our city for the next generation should be well vetted and more transparent?

Each of you tonight has the opportunity to set a higher bar for our board, our city, and the people you represent. A vote against this contract is not a vote against a bridge; it is a vote in favor of a better, more informed government that makes well-educated decisions for the people it represents. We should set this bar and set it high. Our constituents are counting on us.

In Solidarity,

Nina Sherwood

Sent from my iPhone

