



State & Commerce Committee - Board of Representatives

Mitchell Kaufman, Chair

Salvatore Gabriele, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE REPORT

Date: Monday, May 24, 2010

Time: 8:00 p.m.

Place: Republican Caucus Room, 4th Floor, Government Center, 888 Washington Boulevard

The State & Commerce Committee met as indicated above. Present were Committee Chair Kaufman, Vice Chair Gabriele, and Committee Member Reps. Heaphy, Kaufman, Lombardo, Molgano, Sklover and Summerville. Also present were Reps. Day, DeLuca and Zelinsky; Laure Aubuchon, Director of Economic Development; Todd Dumais, Land Use; Julia Wade, Stamford Partnership; Tim Curtin, OTHRA; Jim Nixon, URC; Sandy Goldstein, DSSD; and Jeff Pardo, Engineering.

Chair Kaufman called the meeting to order at 8:00.

| Item No. | Description | Action Taken |
|-----------------------------|---|--------------------|
| 1. SC28.002 | REVIEW; update on Stamford census by the Stamford Census Coordinator and review of budget and expenses. | Report Made |

Todd Dumais reviewed the Operating Budget for the Census, a copy of which is attached. He noted that of the \$40,765 which had been appropriated, \$26,519.94 has been expended to date. The position of Census Coordinator was filled on March 1, 2010, but the individual hired left after 5 weeks when he obtained another position. They have asked the BOF to reallocate the funding into the Professional/Contracted Services account. He then reviewed the mail-in response rates, as shown on the attached sheets. Stamford's mail-in response rate is higher than other cities in Connecticut other than Norwalk, although the return rates were lower than in 2000. He also provided the response rates for census tracts within the city and maps relating the tracts to voting districts and a copy of the web page regarding the current door-to-door census visits. Copies of these are [attached](#).

Julia Wade provided the committee with a list of recent events which have been held to boost responses to the census as well as a list of organizations which have partnered with Stamford to boost response rates. She stated that the Boston regional office considers the Stamford response rate a success, particularly because response rates in "hard-to-count" tracts mostly increased. She noted that 300 jobs were created in Stamford by the Census, and that they tried to have these jobs filled with Stamford residents. In response to a question from the Committee, Ms. Wade noted that elected officials are prohibited from being Census employees, even if they take the test. She also confirmed that the individual hired as the Census Coordinator did not work for the Stamford Partnership. Mr. Dumais stated that he would provide the committee with a more detailed breakdown of how the \$26,519 had been spent.

2. SC28.003 REVIEW; Laure Aubuchon trip to DC to meet the **Report Made**
Federal delegation.

Laure Aubuchon reported on her recent trip to DC with the Mayor, as well as a second, more recent trip to the DOT. The goal of the trip was to introduce the Mayor to the Connecticut Senators, Representative Himes, the DOT, the EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers. It was an opportunity for the Mayor to reiterate his priorities, particularly in light of TIGER and future appropriations. His highest priority was the Atlantic Street underpass. Other priorities, in order, were the COPS program for tactical training of police officers, the Urban Transitway, the Mill River, Storm Water drainage, Metro Green and the Stamford Government Center Fuel Cell. The first three priorities will be taken up by Rep. Himes. Ms. Aubuchon said the City will be seeking money for the Urban Transitway in the second round of TIGER in the fall. Both Senators and Rep. Himes lobbied the Secretary of the DOT. The City will join this with the Complete Streets project, as it is unlikely that the City would get funding for 2 separate projects. She explained that the City will go forward with Metro Green without federal funding. In response to questions from the committee, Ms. Aubuchon stated that the City did not get TIGER funding last time because of the perception that all of Fairfield County has a high per capita income and because money had been given to the project in the past. She stated that there will be less money distributed this time. Because of cuts in her travel budget, Ms Aubuchon does not anticipate future trips to DC. She does not view this as a problem, because there are lobbyists working on behalf of the City. In addition, it is very helpful having Jim Himes having his office in the building.

3. SC28.009 REVIEW; purpose of the creation of OTHRA and its **Report Made**
duties and responsibilities.

Tim Curtin reviewed the attached talking points regarding the creation of OTHRA, its duties and responsibilities and the current status of Old Town Hall. Jeff Pardo, the construction manager for the project explained that the kitchen was not part of the original plan, but was required by the Board of Health. Representative Day explained that OTHRA is technically a separate agency and acts separately from the City, but that Old Town Hall is still a City project. OTHRA is chartered to be made up of City officials. He explained that the Board of Representatives would never have approved selling the building to an independent agency if the intent had been that the building would not remain a City property. OTHRA was formed for tax purposes in order to get financing, and OTHRA was run for many years by Mike Freimuth as the Executive Director. The City has always required that there be public space in the building. He stated that this was a good deal for the city, even with the change in the financial climate and that financing the project without a tenant in place was not a bad idea. The City is working with OTHRA to help find a tenant for the building, as required by the financing. It is more difficult to find a tenant without full activation of the public space and without any build-out money. Ms. Aubuchon stated that the City has a list of caterers who are able to work in the space without a kitchen for small events. She stated that if it were possible to get events lined up for the space, there might be enough money raised to put in the kitchen. Mr. Nixon explained that the space cannot be leased out at no cost, because there are up-front expenses when the space is used, such as security and janitorial staff. Representative Day explained that the goal of the OTHRA board was to return the building to the City after 7 years and the financing requirements are met, when the need for OTHRA will no longer exist. Mr. Nixon explained that the City should be viewed as a major investor in the project, so that the building will not ultimately cost the City anything and the City will make a profit, but it will require a small amount of money to keep the public part of the building open and usable so that it can generate income. Ms. Aubuchon will provide the Board with an estimate of how much would be required to get the building appropriately activated.

Chair Kaufman closed the meeting at 9:45.

Respectfully submitted,

Mitchell Kaufman, Chair