

STATE HOUSE NEWS SERVICE

<http://www.statehousenews.com>

BOSTON IN "FIGHT WITH QUINCY" OVER LONG ISLAND BRIDGE

By Chris Triunfo

STATE HOUSE NEWS SERVICE

BOSTON, OCT. 2, 2018.....City officials on Tuesday said that the Long Island Bridge is set to return in 2021, leading to a series of new recovery service providers and buildings that will expand Boston's attempt to curb the opioid crisis.

Chris Osgood, Boston chief of streets, said the new bridge will be similar to the original 1951 bridge that was removed due to safety concerns in 2014.

"The design and materials from the original bridge will be updated to ensure a longer-lasting structure that will last for decades," Osgood said during a Boston City Council hearing.

Osgood was joined by Chief of Health and Human Services Marty Martinez and Public Facilities Director Tricia Lyons as city councilors hoped to get a better idea of the planned project's timeline.

"The closure of the Long Island Bridge eliminated hundreds of recovery beds and hundreds of beds for the city's homeless, which exacerbated our city's resources," said At-Large City Councilor Annissa Essaibi George, who co-chaired the hearing with Councilor Michelle Wu. "We need this new recovery center, and we need it now."

Osgood said he believes that the project could be completed in 2021 as long as it keeps up with what he called an "aggressive timeline." When pressed by Councilor Andrea Campbell on the price of the project, Osgood kept his estimate at "roughly \$90 million."

According to Martinez, the bridge replacement superstructure would be assembled offsite and then floated into place on barges in order to minimize impacts on the seafloor around the bridge. This, along with the bridge's implications, has drawn significant attention from the city of Quincy, where the bridge to Long Island originates and which adamantly opposes its reconstruction. Quincy's Conservation Commission (QCC) rejected the project on Sept. 25, following approval from Boston's Conservation Commission.

During Tuesday's hearing, City Councilor Michael Flaherty expressed frustration that the mayor's office did not have firm numbers on how many beds would be available at new treatment center.

"We're in a fight with Quincy, and we're going to look pretty stupid if we can't even answer the basics." Flaherty said. "We need answers, and we need them yesterday."

Osgood's solution to Quincy's written denial has been to appeal the QCC's findings. When Councilor Campbell asked what would happen if all the appeals were lost and Quincy continued to say no, Osgood responded by saying, "We wouldn't be able to go forward."

Many of the councilors seem to anticipate a tough fight with Quincy, citing Mayor Thomas Koch's request last week to the Quincy City Council for \$250,000 to pay for attorney's fees.

Councilor Flaherty also complained to city officials about the intersection of Melnea Cass Boulevard and Massachusetts Avenue, which has seen an uptick in its homeless population. Since the closing of the Long Island facility, services expanded in that part of Boston, making the intersection a hub for those seeking recovery services. Flaherty said he wants a "census" to see where those people are coming from.

Quincy residents and officials say the bridge would present a safety hazard as vehicles accessing the bridge must travel the city's narrow, winding roads. The previous bridge stood against decades of complaints from locals. Mayor Koch advocates for a ferry service from Boston rather than the bridge.

-END-

10/02/2018

Serving the working press since 1894
<http://www.statehousenews.com>

© Copyright 1997-2019 State House News Service