

TESTIMONY OF RCI/BRIDGEPORT LANDING DEVELOPMENT  
SUBMITTED TO THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Friday, February 19, 2016

**RE: SB No. 78 An Act Concerning the Disposition of Dredged Materials from Certain Harbors and Ports on Long Island Sound.**

Senator Kennedy, Representative Albis, Senator Chapin, Representative Shaban and Members of the Environment Committee:

I am submitting this testimony on behalf of our company which is leading the revitalization of downtown Bridgeport waterfront at Steel Pointe. We have been working diligently for over a decade to reshape, renew and provide new vitality to this once industrial and formerly distressed residential community that is the key to the Harbor and Port of Bridgeport and create a working, living and recreational access for the people of the City of Bridgeport and the entire Fairfield County region. We are doing this in a close partnership with the City of Bridgeport, the State of Connecticut and the federal government. As is apparent to anyone who travels by railroad, highway or on Long Island Sound we are successfully well into the first phase of that development, providing unique and high quality retail and dining opportunities as well as many hundreds of construction and well-paying retail employment for many of the area's citizens.

Everyone in this General Assembly should be proud of those facts and the best is yet to come. We are engaged in the actual work on the waterfront which will be providing and will continue to provide even more employment, more opportunities for waterfront recreation and first time in a long, long time direct public access to the proud and storied waterfront of this great and largest City in our State. To paraphrase the words of the Senate Co-chair's Uncle, the late President Kennedy, we are doing these things not because they are easy, but rather because they are hard and they crystallize a vision that this developer has had for fifteen years for Steel Pointe. We are pleased to say that vision has been embraced by this City, State and federal government to provide a unique resource for Bridgeport and Southwestern Connecticut's future.

To get to this point we have had to pursue a permitting process that is arguably more arduous than most in any state and that to fully describe would rapidly consume your patience with this testimony. However, that was and is the right thing to do. This project borders on one of Connecticut's most precious resources, the Long Island Sound Estuary, and landside development, even if heavily water-related like our development should receive complete and thorough scrutiny. We successfully piloted through that process and also cite that with considerable pride. We are grateful to the federal, state, regional and local officials who spent so many hundreds of hours working with us to make this development possible. Their great care and scrutiny and that of our small army of experts is one of the principal reasons that we must, reluctantly, yet firmly **oppose** SB 78.

New York State has refused for a very long time to recognize the ability of Connecticut to grow and thrive on its vital expanse of waterfront. They have, at every turn, attempted to thwart every effort of this State to move forward in that regard. They recognize that our rivers run rapidly into the Sound and the Sound runs rapidly along the Connecticut coast toward New York City. This bill not only assists our combative neighbor in having our harbors and ports silt in and lie useless for commercial or recreational purposes. It will also serve to vastly inflate the costs of sensible, permitted development along Connecticut's coastline, by requiring that **all** dredged materials be transported to distant sites inland and stymies the productive research into dewatering and reuse of non-toxic dredged materials for landside use in protecting our harbors and ports on Long Island Sound, rather than leaving our low-lying communities subject to the vagaries of the and increasingly unpredictable of the seasons.

Please reconsider this proposal. We know its concerns are sincere, but so are the interests of our regulators including the Army Corps of Engineers and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and their sister agencies across the three levels of government. Sincere as well, is the well-argued position of Connecticut's Delegation the Houses of Congress which we append here and has our complete support,

Many thanks for your kind consideration of our remarks.

Sincerely

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