

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

PUBLIC HEARING

CHAIRPERSON: Representative Edwin
Vargas

SENATORS: Duff, Fasano, Formica,
Looney, Moore

REPRESENTATIVES: Godfrey, Perillo, Phipps,
Vargas, Yaccarino

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Calling the Public Hearing of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee into order will be our Clerk. Please read the safety instructions.

WENDY FRITZ: In the interest of safety, I would ask that you note the location of an access to the exits in this hearing room. The two doors through which you entered are the emergency exits and are marked with exit signs. In the event of an emergency, please walk quickly to the nearest exit. After exiting the room, go to your right and exit the building by the main entrance or follow the exit signs to one of the other exits. Please quickly exit the building and follow any other instructions from the Capitol Police. Do not delay, and do not return unless you are advised that it is safe to do so. In the event of a lockdown announcement, please remain in the hearing room and stay away from the exit doors until an all-clear announcement is heard.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Madam Clerk. Just a quick review -- what we do is first we interview all the designated nominees, and after an opportunity to interview them, we give the public and opportunity to weigh in, either pro or con, on any of the

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nominees, and we also enter any written communications we may have received regarding any of the nominees into the record. The first order of business today is a House Resolution for review, which is the nomination of David Kooris of Stamford to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Connecticut Port Authority. Before you take a seat, will you please raise your right hand? Do you promise to tell us the truth and nothing but the truth?

DAVID KOORIS: I do.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Please be seated, and it is customary for the Committee to allow the designee to make some introductory remarks before we open it up for questioning. So, the floor is yours, David.

DAVID KOORIS: Great. Thank you very much. Thank you, Representative and Senator and members of the Committee. I'll be very brief in my opening remarks just to provide some context for those that may be here or watching who haven't been following the Port Authority for the last little bit.

I've been a member of the Board for about a year, first as a designee of Commissioner Smith when I was Deputy Commissioner at DECD, then as a designee of Commissioner Lehman. In June of 2019, I was voted by my colleagues on the Board as vice-chairman. Not realizing that in short order, July of that year, I would become acting chairman with the resignation of the then chairwoman. Since that time, I am very proud of my record on the Board.

In a tumultuous period, we've conducted several audits. We have implemented dozens of new policies and procedures in response to those necessary

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corrective actions on those audits including a new ethics policy, and we've had ethics training of the Board, freedom of information training of the Board. We are in complete compliance with all the open chat book reporting with the Office of the State Comptroller. We've brought our financial reporting in order with the implementation of QuickBooks and training of the staff. You know, we've come a very long way in a short amount of time, and I've spent a lot of time and energy helping the Board and the staff get to where we are today. In the near term, we still have the task ahead of us of attracting and ultimately hiring a new executive director. I've essentially been essentially functioning as that in the interim, and I hope to have the opportunity to complete out those tasks that I embarked upon when I became Acting Commissioner to rebuild public confidence in the Authority, to enable it to achieve its goals and objectives. With that, I welcome any comments or questions that you all may have.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you very much for your introductory comments, and congratulations on appointment to the Port Authority. And, you know, it is obvious you are very well qualified. Are you still with the Department of Economic Development?

DAVID KOORIS: I'm not. I resigned; January 3 of 2020 was my last day, and I've taken a new position in the City of Stamford, which is why the Governor appointed me to a seat that had been vacated because I no longer was a designee of the Commissioner as an ex officio member.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Well, once again congratulations on your appointment by Governor Lamont to the Port Authority, and congratulations on your new job in

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Stamford, and really I have no questions. I'm sure you'll do a great job for us on the Port Authority. Thank you for your willingness to serve. At this point, I'll allow Committee members that would like to make any comments. First, my Co-Chair, any comments by Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good morning, David. How are you? I'd just wanted to thank you for continuing to take on this role, especially in light of your new position in Stamford and the traveling that it will take.

How do you -- outside of kind of some of the comments that have happened over the last several months on the Port Authority and kind of the reconfiguration now with some new appointees that are going to be heard today, how do you envision your role or the Port Authority in general over the next one or two years, and what impact it will make for our ports around the state? The legislature was very specific when it created the Port Authority about not only working with big ports but also little ports around the state, protecting our boating industry, our tourism industry, our economic development there. So, from your perspective, how do you see us going forward in the short and medium term?

DAVID KOORIS: Sure. Thank you. Thank you for the supportive comments and for the question. You know, fundamentally we are very different than most port authorities around the country. Most port authorities directly manage facilities and are the operators of those logistic hubs. We are not. As you're all aware, we own one property, and that's the State Pier in New London. We just executed a

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partnership with the private sector to advance the prospects of that facility for off-shore wind. But all of our other ports and working harbors are privately owned facilities, locally publically owned facilities, and, so, our role is really that of kind of marketing and facilitator. And, so, over the coming year, and we're very focused on this with our search for executive director, and I should note we have a great search firm who understands that nuance, because we are not looking for the typical port director who has an operational role overseeing their facilities. We're looking for someone who is better about telling the story of Connecticut's ports and the opportunities they present and connecting the dots between our manufacturing sector for those companies within the state that import and export with the logistics providers, whether they be, you know, the maritime freight industry, the rail freight industry, the trucking industry, and identifying those opportunities that are not currently being seized to advance the prospects of the state.

And, so, I think more than anything else the primary role of the Port Authority under the leadership of the new executive director over the coming years is to have that nuanced understanding of the ways in which Connecticut's economy functions and to connect those dots between our manufacturing sector and our logistics sector to increase the flow of goods through our facilities to the betterment of our employers.

Just one final note on the smaller working harbors: We're very proud of the SHIPP program. That has been a phenomenal mechanism to steer state capitol

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funding into local harbor improvement. We get a lot of positive feedback from the communities that we've awarded grants to, and continuing and expanding those kinds of programs so that we can incrementally through infrastructure investment increase the capacity of our working harbors is a fundamental focus of the Authority.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Great, thank you. And how do you -- based on public comments over the last few months on governing and controls of the Port Authority versus other quasi-publics, what type of new rules or new governance structure would you be looking at as Chair in order to kind of avoid some of the issues that may have come up the last few months?

DAVID KOORIS: Absolutely. So, I think the good news is that over the last several months we have enacted many of the policies and procedures that specifically address the shortfalls that were identified by the state auditors and by our external auditors, and those have all made it through committee, made it through the Board, and some limited ones are currently published in the Journal of Law Review for public comment. Those involve everything ranging from travel and expense procedures to an updated ethics code to a purchasing policy to an accounting procedural manual -- all of which are laser-focused on specifically addressing those issues that have emerged, and we're very confident that the actions that we've taken going back to about August set the foundation to address those issues that have been of concern to our key stakeholders.

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SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Great. Thank you. Yeah, I think that it's going to, you know, obviously be a time of reset and reflection, and we have new leadership obviously, and we want to make sure that we are working because we know that the ports provide a lot to our state, provide a lot of economic impact to our state, and we don't want to really skip a beat when it comes to that, especially, I live in Norwalk, and Norwalk is not one of the major ports of the state, but yet has an important function in a number of ways that we believe contributes greatly to the State of Connecticut. And so does Darien which is smaller, but nonetheless, there are lots of jobs there.

DAVID KOORIS: Absolutely.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): So, I appreciate your comments on that and may have some additional ones after, but I will now yield to and thank the Chairman.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Senator Duff. Any other members of the Committee? Senator Formica.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and good morning. How are you?

DAVID KOORIS: Good, thanks.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Thank you for your service, and welcome to the Capitol today. Just I want to go back a little bit and kind of have you bring us forward to where we are now because we seem to be in two distinct and different places from the Port Authority's standpoint. And from my perspective, the Port Authority seems to have changed the conversation of what's actually happening in terms of the reason for the port development there. I

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know that you and others on that committee have worked hard to reframe that conversation, as you just mentioned to the Senator some of the things you're doing. You got here in July, you said, of last year?

DAVID KOORIS: Yes, in June I was voted Vice Chair and then became Acting Chair in July.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): So, the indiscretions, if you will, of the actions of the Port Authority predated that time period in July.

DAVID KOORIS: Yes, correct.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): And you were not on the Board at that time. You were appointed later.

DAVID KOORIS: I was on the Board for several months preceding my being voted Vice Chair, from about March of 2019, in a much more minor role, obviously.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): And that was at a time when things were coming to light and things were being discussed publically, and you were in, and you became Chair.

So, some of the concerns of the community have been revolving around decisions that the Port Authority has made with regard to, you know, contracts for pier redevelopment, contracts for vendors to use the pier, and etc. The implication by some was that it's tainted perhaps those contracts or those initiatives, and you had a fairly direct role in the finalization of a lot of those. Can you just speak a little bit to about the past and where you came in in that difficult bridge that you had to have so you could get to that [Crosstalk].

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DAVID KOORIS: Sure, absolutely. Thank you for the opportunity to do so. So, as you know, concurrent to all of these concerns being raised around operations at the Port Authority, the Authority was looking to embark on a fairly significant deal which was ultimately effectuated last week. I can say with confidence, having been significantly and directly involved over these last several months that many additional eyes from the administration, particularly from the Office of Policy and Management, from the Governor's Office, were placed on the detail of those agreements as a mechanism to vet and ensure that they could proceed independently and were not jeopardized, or the quality of which was not compromised by those issues that had been brought to light previously.

You know, these deals have been vetted by many, many individuals and many sets of eyes, frankly more so than the typical contract going through the executive branch would be. And I can say that I certainly believe, and I hope that you all and the community at large have confidence that we have reassessed, reevaluated, re-vetted, and ultimately tweaked, and then finally determined that these agreements are in the best interests of the state and can be, you know, somewhat isolated from those other issues at the Port Authority, which we have simultaneously, as I mentioned earlier, addressed through a broad swath of corrective actions through policies and procedure adoption.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Thank you, thank you very much. You know, the Governor came out to New London -- I believe it was last May -- and indicated that there was an agreement there where the fine print

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had to be inked, but there was an agreement, and that agreement pretty much corresponds to the timeline that you talk about that the previous two Chairs or so before were the architects or, you know, in conversation with everybody and had direct negotiations with that to get that done.

And then, since that announcement in May and subsequently your position as Chair, and I think you just indicated all of that got relooked at.

DAVID KOORIS: Correct.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): And it's my understanding that the negotiations then moved to OPM and other agencies -- I am not quite sure exactly. I mean, I was on the fringe trying to get information, and you and I have had conversations going forth because, as you know and people may know, this is in my district. So, there were more conversations by other sets of eyes and other agencies to talk about the fine points of the deal both in terms of the financial aspects and the time aspects in terms of the leasing of the pier, etc.

DAVID KOORIS: Correct.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): That would be correct?

DAVID KOORIS: Correct. Both the Office of Policy and Management and the Department of Administrative Services played a critical role in a new set of eyes on the agreements from a legal perspective and from an implementation perspective, and additional capacity through a series of MOUs executed by the Port Authority ensure that some of those resources, particularly from OPM and DAS are now in place to

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support the relatively limited capacity that exists within the Port Authority itself.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): And were there other entities being negotiated with, or was it just that one wind company who ended up with the deal.

DAVID KOORIS: So, it was just that one as a subject -- or as an output of the RFP process that had been, you know, managed in late 2018 and early 2019. There were more responses at that time, and we've gone back and taken a look at those, as well, and these were the firms, both Gateway Terminal, that ultimately was awarded the concession agreement in January of 2019 and then Orsted/Eversource partnership that came in as the top-ranked bid from that RFP process.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Thank you very much. I was going to get to the Gateway taking over for Logistec, and that was an RFP process that went on -- a separate RFP process went out for Orsted, or did Orsted bid on the --

DAVID KOORIS: It was the same RFP process where the Port Authority issued an RFP with the primary purpose of identifying a new operator to be awarded a concession agreement because the term with the prior operator was coming up.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Just to be clear, for people who may not be familiar, operator, you mean operator of the Port itself, not operator of the wind --

DAVID KOORIS: Correct, of the State Pier facility itself.

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SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): But it would handle cargo that included wind, but --

DAVID KOORIS: Correct, correct. And the RFP at that time in 2018 indicated to the marketplace with the recognition that offshore wind was a new potential cargo class, that we were interested in seeing whether or not there was particular interest from that industry. Some responses to that RFP were exclusively for operations of the Port. Other responses were for operations with the Port with an option to partner with wind, and, so, Gateway Terminal in their response presented as an operator with an option to partner with Orsted and Eversource. So, they were subject to the same -- they were part of the same response as options essentially.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Getting back to a little bit about the Port Authority, it's my recollection, and I think in 2015 or 2016, I forget when it was, the Port Authority was created as part of a budget process. It was in the back of a budget that would create it. And as a result of that, I'm not sure if the proper care was taken to establish the makeup of that particular Port Authority, and I'm talking in terms of flow charts, job descriptions, financial applications, and things. And all of those things when you got there, were they in place or is that part of what had to be put in place as a result of the publicity and the indiscretions that were out?

DAVID KOORIS: There were several policies and procedures that had been implemented, there were several that had been proposed to the Board but not yet finalized or adopted, and then there were several that had not yet been initiated. Now,

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frankly as of our most recent Board meeting, we have been incrementally chipping away at those over the last several months, and we have now adopted all of those which cover the operational aspects that you would all expect we would have policies and procedures in place for.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Thank you for that. And that includes the financial certainly. You mentioned QuickBooks, but it's my understanding that there's another agency that's overseeing the financial at this point too. So, it's not just the Port Authority bookkeeper that's dealing with this; it has to go upstream a little bit, and someone else's eyes are on that.

DAVID KOORIS: Correct. Yeah, it's essentially been a three-pronged aspect as it relates to finances. There has been training and new technical capacity provided to staff. There have been some external resources procured to support staff, and then we have the additional layer of OPM that is currently vetting all expenditures and all contracts.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Thank you very much for that. In the personnel issues that have occurred, there were two office personnel, if you will, or two employees that were subject to discipline. Has that been resolved? Are both those cases finalized, or are they still out there?

DAVID KOORIS: No. I mean the first was, you know, was separated as of early July, and the second as of -- I may get the date wrong, but I believe it was late September, and those actions are completed.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Thank you. Just a few other questions if you don't mind, Mr. Chairman.

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The Port Authority also handles other ports throughout the state, right? All of the other ports that kind of oversee. Some of the ports are private. I believe New London is the only State-operated or --

DAVID KOORIS: New London is the only State-owned facility, and then there are local port authorities in New London, Bridgeport, and New Haven, some of which own some modest property. Most of the properties within those are privately owned, and then, of course, there are the harbor committees in the smaller facilities. So, I wouldn't say the -- I wouldn't use the term *oversee* as much as provide additional resources, support, and a boarder perspective and access to companies or to markets that the individual entities may not be able to achieve on their own.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): So you're not in any way a controlling entity or an umbrella entity over all this, and the ports and marinas and such operate themselves, and then you again bring, hopefully, more resources for them to be more successful, and that's the point --

DAVID KOORIS: Correct.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): And you talked about, you know, promoting business back in New London. I think you said the economy -- helping the economy function and moving through. You know we have Congressman Courtney was very good along with the Council of Governments in getting that TIGER Grant to improve that freight line that connects to the pier and moves its way up north through Norwich, Willimantic, Stafford Springs, Brattleboro, etc.

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And the idea was always to establish some kind of support component assembly plants or manufacturing plants in areas such as Columbia or Norwich where the land was a little more available and less expensive than it might be right there in New London.

Those are still the kind of things that this new contract will allow for with Orsted and Eversource, as well as there's talk about exclusive use on that pier for wind-only components which, you know, these things are the size of the Empire State Building almost. So, it needs some space, but other cargo will be part of this contract, as well.

DAVID KOORIS: At times, yeah. So, first it's important to note that the freight rail and the improvements that the congressman and others were able to secure has value independent of the Port, and we are absolutely supportive of the logistic opportunities that that presents, both for intermodal connectivity between the rail and the port but also between the rail and the highway system. Second, one of the reasons why the agreement, you know, has taken the time over these last several months was to be responsive to exactly those types of requests from key stakeholders, and we have been working very closely with the railroad to find ways to maintain connectivity between the port and the railroad on additional sites beyond that at State Pier.

Finally, related to the use of State Pier itself, the agreement is geared toward maximum utilization of the facility. At times when wind campaigns are

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in full steam, and as you mentioned, these components are significant in their scale and in their number, there will not be other opportunities for cargo at the facility. But at the times when they are not using the facility at its entirety, Orsted, Eversource, Gateway, and the Port Authority have mechanisms in place and are committed to filling in those aspects of the Pier with a broad range of other cargo, which, I might add, the potential customer base and the types of cargos that could potentially flow through the port are drastically expanded with the improvements that we are making, about half of which are on the private dime, to the facility through this agreement.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Thank you very much. I don't think people realize that these things are enormous parts, and they're going to be brought there by barge probably from Europe or wherever they're coming from and then transported out 30 miles or so, wherever the wind fields are, to another area where they'll be gathered and assembled and then installed.

DAVID KOORIS: Correct, after hundreds of workers do welding and wiring on New London Pier to those components.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): So, the other piece that was part of this, and I think we talked about this, would be the condemned apartments on, what is that the northwest side, kind of corner, and the Governor was very responsive to the request that we had with regard to getting on the Bond Authority and providing the City of New London with cleanup for that. Do you anticipate that to be -- once that's cleaned up and New London controls that -- but

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that's close enough to be part of pier support operations or port support operations?

DAVID KOORIS: Absolutely. There is a bridge-height restriction which will limit to some degree what types of cargo could have connectivity, but that is a prime facility in close proximity to the port that expect to see activity which is drawn to that site because of its co-location.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): And that is a New London-owned asset so any financial or economic gains would be for the City of New London, which in my understanding is a part of the Orsted deal separate from the Port Authority. There's, you know, \$1.3 million dollars with an escalator each year, depending on megawatt production coming out of there for the host city agreement, and then there are some state monies coming to New London with regard to monies to offset any municipal services that New London may supply and a little bit of what you get -- you meaning the Port Authority pass-through -- for dollars on the cargo that goes across the port; they get a piece of that.

DAVID KOORIS: That's correct. Every bit of activity brings value in dollars to the city, and as you correctly point out, the benefit of Crystal Ave. is that it is city-owned and totally within their control on how to take advantage of that site.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): And from my perspective being the senator in that district, the economic development, I believe, in the City of New London is the cornerstone of the economic opportunities there for Southeastern Connecticut, and it touches Norwich almost with that river and between the two of them,

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could really drive the economy in terms of jobs and maritime economy there, and, so, I'm very excited about that, and I'm glad that New London is put in.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, the last question will be regarding the Cross Sound Ferry folks who have been there for I don't know how long, and, you know, there is my understanding that coexistence for them to operate their business and for the port to operate its cargo and its exclusive, or semi-exclusive, wind, they seem to be now compatible, and all those issues are --

DAVID KOORIS: That's absolutely correct. A lot of the work over the last several months was involved in a redesign of the facility to ensure a lack of conflict with Cross Sound, which also has the dual benefit of being a better facility for the State over the long run. So, through their advocacy and their involvement and the engagement of that key stakeholder, we were not only able to address their concerns but make the project better for the city and the region.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): And is the salt guy going to still be there, or are there conversations --

DAVID KOORIS: There are conversations going on about relocation, hopefully in Southeastern Connecticut, but to maintain the viability of that competition in the marketplace.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Well, I for one thank you for answering all the questions today and helping me understand and the Committee understand the timeline and, you know, the fact that you stepped into a very volatile situation, and, you know, you calmly worked your way through it. I happened to be in attendance

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at one of your public meetings where there were a few hundred people in attendance, and I thought you very skillfully handled that and brought all the information out. So, thank you for your service, and I think the State should be grateful to have your service. So, thank you, and thank you, Mr. Chairman; I appreciate the latitude for the conversation.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Senator Formica, and I recognize our Senate colleague here, Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, and congratulations on your nomination.

DAVID KOORIS: Thank you.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): The first thing I'd like to ask you about is that since we have the three deepwater ports in the state -- Bridgeport, New Haven, and New London -- how do you see each of them? Does each of them have a unique niche? Are there in which they can complement each other without undermining each other by competing in areas where one might have a greater strength than another? How do you perceive maximizing development of each of the three ports with each of its capacities and how they differ from each other? I know obviously now New London is becoming a focus of wind production, but how do you see the three ports and their differences and their strengths and their potentials?

DAVID KOORIS: Sure, yeah, great question. So, I think you're absolutely right in the way that you frame the question -- that ports of these scale have

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to find their niche opportunity within which they can excel. They can't be everything to everybody, and they're never going to compete with the larger ports along the Eastern Seaboard, particularly those in closest proximity to us.

So, we've worked a lot with this in conjunction with the local port authorities and the host cities. We believe strongly that wind is that niche for New London, and we're happy to have now embarked on capitalizing on that opportunity. New Haven does a phenomenal job on a range of breakbulk cargo and certainly petroleum imports, and, you know, the dredge that would be pending there will unlock even greater opportunities.

Bridgeport, the niche is a little bit more diverse. They have a robust sort of shipbuilding and ship repair industry. They have an opportunity for wind which has been seeded through the last DEEP RFP and the selection of the company there. But also Bridgeport's proximity to the metropolitan core with New York City and the demand base there presents an opportunity for more consumer-oriented goods coming in. We have challenges as it relates to container, but there are other things. Bridgeport did very well some time ago importing bananas and other fruit for the marketplace, the big challenge there being the economic justification for the dredge.

But I do think that the breakbulk and the petroleum in New Haven, the wind in New London, and more consumer-oriented -- and also manufacturing-oriented. Ironically, a lot of the breakbulk goods that were coming into New London as feedstock for

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the manufacturing sector were ultimately being trucked to the western, kind of New Haven region and the greater Bridgeport region. So they have an opportunity there to bring in goods that more directly feed into the manufacturing sector.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): Good. I appreciate your overview on those issues because obviously nature is not making any additional ports; so, we have what we have, and we need to make the most of them as we can without having them create inefficiencies by duplicate functions that are better concentrated in one place rather than another.

One thing I just wanted to ask you -- a few times over the years, there have been proposals to look at, you know, dealing with the traffic congestion on Long Island and the idea of cross sound ferries. Any thoughts on that, and obviously it's been explored a few times but has never become a long-term successful commercial venture. Any sense on potential there?

DAVID KOORIS: Sure, yeah, so between the two current companies, the Bridgeport & Port Jefferson Ferry and Cross Sound and their affiliates, it is amazing the amount of travel that occurs between Long Island and Connecticut across the Sound. And it's not just passenger travel. The amount of 18-wheelers and truck-borne freight that makes use of that crossing is pretty phenomenal. There is a new federal program, the Marine Highway designation, and the Port Authority was actually the lead applicant on the designation for Port Jefferson, working with Cross Sound, which presents an opportunity to funnel additional federal resources towards the

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infrastructure in support of that transportation connection.

So, I concur that it is a great opportunity. It's one that's being served by these two companies better than most ferry companies around the country, and it's one that we're already developing a partnership with them and with the Federal Government to further support.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): Also there is in terms of working with the DOT in all of this because the DOT does continue to have some responsibility for funding port improvements and dredging and other maritime activities. So, I think some of the dredging is a mixture of state and federal funds, right, through the Army Corps of Engineers and things of that nature. Your thoughts on coordinating activities between the Port Authority and DOT in working in these areas, especially in areas where capital projects or major initiatives like dredging need to be undertaken. Because I know obviously in your previous capacity with Economic Development, obviously some of the activities of that department also intersect with DOT and their responsibilities. So, just some overview on that, if you would.

DAVID KOORIS: Sure, absolutely. So, DOT has been a phenomenal partner. Their participation on the Board is robust, and they have been an active participant both at the Board level and at the staff level. And one thing that may not be widely known - - one of our full-time staff people at the Port Authority is technically a DOT employee that we have on loan, and, so, his connectivity to the agency, to the department and the individuals therein is very

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strong. So, I can say definitively that at both the Board and the staff level we have a robust partnership, and we're always looking for continued ways to collaborate.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): That's very good because I think that's going to be critical to have a willing and responsive partner in DOT. Just in line with that, what kinds of capital improvements do you think are needed now at each of the ports to maximize the use of the State's harbors? What do you think should be primarily in the on-deck circle in terms of allocations of bonding funds for capital purposes related to the ports? What's needed at each of the three places?

DAVID KOORIS: Sure. So, beyond the agreement and the State's financial commitment thereto for the improvements at the State Pier facility in New London, New Haven dredge is by far our top priority, and we were very happy to see it included in the Governor's Bond Bill proposal, and we hope it makes it through the legislative process. Increasing the depth in New Haven opens up a broad range of opportunity that our private actors there can take advantage of.

Beyond that, there are targeted improvements in Bridgeport. Certainly there is a need for dredge. We have a lot of work to do to make the economic justification to the Federal Government for Bridgeport Harbor, but there exist near-term opportunities in Black Rock Harbor which is a robust working facility.

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And then throughout the smaller working harbors, the SHIPP program is one that we think has done a lot of good in targeted dredging, in dock improvements, in bulkhead improvements, and based on the response that we see through our solicitations from communities large and small, there is, you know, a long list of targeted improvements that we can help vet and help prioritize to increase the capacity of the collection of our harbors.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): Thank you. And also one of the other issues I think that relates to our ports is rail connections and moving cargo from the ports by rail rather than by truck, or to the ports for pickup. What can you do in your capacity on the Port Authority to promote and encourage rail connections with the three major ports?

DAVID KOORIS: Sure. So we work very closely with the freight railroads. New Haven has a strong connection. New London now with the recent improvements has a stronger connection than it has ever had or has had in recent history, and through the Port Redevelopment Project in New London, we will make that connection even stronger. Bridgeport does not have a direct rail connection. There are theoretically ways to do that, although they are very cost-intensive, but in New London and New Haven, that partnership is strong, and we are consistently looking at ways in which we can participate in targeted improvements to make that intermodal connectivity even better.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): Speaking of intermodal connectivity, I'd like to ask you something that actually relates back to your previous experience at DECD. I was looking at one of the things that you

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did as Deputy Commissioner was to oversee the Office of Transit-Oriented Development at Waterfront Recapture, Brownfield Development Remediation and Redevelopment, obviously so that your experience there makes you, I think, an excellent candidate for the assignment you're undertaking here now.

But on transit-oriented development, I'd just like to ask you about the interaction between DECD and again DOT in that area. One thing in particular I just wanted to mention is that for years there has been sort of a logjam or a dispute between the City of New Haven and DOT regarding a new development centered around Union Station in New Haven. The City has had a vision of trying to create an opportunity for a major transit-oriented development plan that would involve multimodal transportation, new economic development, mixed-use economic development there instead of just building a parking garage there, and it seems that DOT has been focused just on the parking garage part. I don't know if you had any interaction with the DOT on that from the point of view of DECD and recognizing the potential of sites like that for something more than just parking garages just connected to train stations.

DAVID KOORIS: Yes, thank you, Senator. I certainly believe wholeheartedly that the transit system is the key to economic growth and revitalization throughout the state and in Southern and Southwestern Connecticut, in particular. You know, while it's beyond certainly the purview of the Port Authority, I can say that in my time at DECD I was part of some very encouraging conversations between the Governor's Office, DECD, DOT, Department of

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Housing, and OPM that really gave me confidence that we are embarking on a new era of recognizing the value that that infrastructure creates in the communities that it serves and finding creative ways to realize that potential.

As many other metropolitan regions and cities around the country have recognized, transit service, particularly that of the quality that exists at Union Station, is the greatest value creator that the public sector can invest in for economic growth and for housing development, and balancing the need for regional commuting and local economic development is tricky but not insurmountable, and I'm confident that the team that is in place and the partnerships that are being created between DOT, DECD, DOH, OPM, and the Governor's Office are well positioned to, as you said, get through that logjam and do what's best for the state and the local economy.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): Thank you very much, and I'm pleased that you bring such diversity of relevant experience to this position, and I've great confidence in the fact that you're going to do well there.

DAVID KOORIS: Thank you very much, Senator.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Senator Looney. Any further questions or remarks by Committee members? As you noticed, we have Committee members coming in and out. We're all serving on different functions throughout the building, but we do keep our votes open until 4 p.m., so Committee members who are not present have an opportunity to weigh in.

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You know, one question I have, lately some of my, colleagues, myself included, have been questioning whether some of these quasi-public agencies should, you know, fall under closer regulations and scrutiny from the State Government, and one of the ideas that has been floated around has been having the AG's office check, you know, contracts between quasi-publics and outside, you know, contractors or vendors. Do you have any thoughts on that?

DAVID KOORIS: You know, I don't know that I have a thought specifically on the role of the AG's office, but I would say, you know, the trick is just finding the right balance. I think, as we've seen over the last several months, you know, when certain procedures are not adhered to, it can end up countering the mission of these authorities and the State. And so, controls need to be put in place to avoid that occurring. But there is definitely a benefit of having, you know, authorities with a certain level of autonomy.

Obviously, all the appointments come back to this body and to the Executive Branch, so there is strong connectivity with the Legislative and Executive Branch, but allowing a certain level of autonomy to be created and to identify potential partnerships and to seize those, I think, is crucial. So, finding that right balance is, you know, up to you all. We are open to that dialogue and will conform with whatever rules are put before us, but I don't have a specific feeling on the role of the AG's Office.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Well, thank you for your comments on that, and once again, I congratulate you on your reappointment, and without further ado, I'm

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going to ask you a question that we ask all nominees who come before the Committee, which is is there anything in your background that you feel may prove embarrassing either to the Governor and the State of Connecticut or this Committee.

DAVID KOORIS: No.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Well, thank you very much. That concludes the presentation and moves us to our second item on the agenda which is a Senate Joint Resolution to appoint -- well, he's been appointed -- for us to confirm Greg Scully of Redding. He's not here? Greg Scully's not present? Okay, so, and I know that Judi Sheiffele has been rescheduled. So, that would bring us to the last Senate Joint Resolution, Grant W. Westerson of West Saybrook, Connecticut.

Mr. Westerson, would you please raise your right hand? Do you promise to tell us the truth and nothing but the truth? Please be seated, and as is customary, the floor is yours for introductory remarks.

GRANT WESTERSON: Thank you. Good day, high noon. With a name beginning with a "W," I'm usually at the end of the run. Unfortunately, two of our other nominees are not here, but that moves me up, so thank you very much. I was here about two years ago when I got initially nominated to be on the Board, and I explained at that time that I'm not somebody that comes out of the industrial side of the industry, the commercial ports, shipping, breakbulk, fuel, stuff like that. That's nothing that I have any experience with. I come out of the recreational side of the industry.

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As some of you know, I've sat here for close to the last 20 years speaking on boating issues, and that was my interest in getting on the Port Authority. As it was put together from the old maritime Commission, they were tasked with basically looking at all the ports in the state, as you mentioned earlier, and that's where my interest flows. Not so much, I don't want to say, not the big ports, but I'm interested in the Norwalks and the Stoningtons and the Stamford and the Saybrooks and those ports, and probably the biggest part of our program is the SHIPP program, the small harbor infrastructure program, and that's where my interest lies. It's making sure that there are some opportunities for the recreational side of our industry.

I did an economic impact study, it's got to be seven or eight years ago now, for our industry for CMTA, and frankly the numbers were staggering, and if you compare that to the commercial industry, I think you'd find we hold our own in the recreational boating. You can see that throughout the state, but obviously more concentrated along the waterfront. So, that's where my interests lie, that's what I tend to keep an eyeball on, and my experience in the last six months has been watching the State really handling the issues that have been in the forefront for the Port Authority, the stuff that's made the news, and I've seen a lot of the reorganization take place. It's an interesting program, but I've enjoyed my time on it, and I'd like to spend some more time.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Well, thank you for those remarks, and congratulations on your reappointment by the Senate Minority Leader, Senator Len Fasano,

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and, you know, I'd go to the boat shows, and I've been involved with some of the recreational part of boating, and do you think our capacity in Connecticut meets the demand.

GRANT WESTERSON: I think it does. Obviously, it's like the tide that comes and goes. As the economy increases and gets better, you know, the boating industry feels a little bit more harried and pushed, looking for more people and opportunities and facilities, and then as the economy mellows, we see the other thing. Obviously, boating is not a mandatory type of thing. It's an enjoyable way to go, but I think Connecticut is holding our own. I've been in the industry for probably close to 60 years, and I see a lot of the same places that I've seen; it doesn't turn over that often.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Well, thank you. Any questions or remarks by Committee members of the nominee? If not, well -- yes, Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you. Good afternoon. Thank you for your willingness to serve, and it's good to see you again. We appreciate it. You brought up a good point just a few seconds ago about the importance of the boating industry and what that does for our state. Many of us have been very supportive of the industry, as well, and those of us who represent the coastline, even our good chairman here who lives in Hartford understands the importance of it, as he sails down the Connecticut River down into Long Island.

So, I just wonder if you can expand on it a little bit more because, you know, Norwalk, and we have a number of boatyards and slips for folks who do make

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the choice that that's the way they spend their weekends or that's the way they spend some of their leisure money. Talk a little bit about, if you can on the record, about why it's important that we support within the Port Authority the boating industry and tourism and how that is kind of an economic driver from your vantage point.

GRANT WESTERSON: Well, that's a good question. The shorefront, obviously, in Connecticut is not totally public domain like it is on the West Coast. It's privately owned because it started a few hundred years back. But the only way we can keep track of a good workable waterfront is to have some good oversight by government. Access has been opened up. If it wasn't for dredging programs, areas of the state would be unavailable to the public. Beaches have been kept open.

When I did my economic study, I was looking at, like, 10,000 employees and a couple of billion dollars' worth of impact. I mean those are big numbers. Growing up in the industry, you just looked around, and you saw three or four people you worked with, and you didn't think much of it. But you go to a boat show, and you see, oh 100,000 square feet full of boats and all the people that work there making a living, supporting their families, and those are all done around some sort of waterfront, whether it be on a river, one of the inland lakes, or along our hundred-and-some-odd-mile shoreline. It's an important asset, and the Maritime Commission was tasked with managing that under DOT's supervision, and that morphed into now the Port Authority.

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I think it's important for them to concentrate on the major ports; obviously, that's a big impact. We don't have heating oil, we don't have salt, and we don't have all the other supplies that the State needs at the right time. Dredging the bigger ports is an important asset, but also the little ports keep an awful lot of other people employed and feed their families, and through the Small Harbor program with the Port Authority, they're doing that. They're sharing the costs of dredging. They're sharing the cost of making sure a municipal pier is available to everybody. I think it's a good program.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you. I appreciate that, and, again, thank you for your service. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

GRANT WESTERSON: Thank you for your help, Senator.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Senator Duff. Any remarks by our Vice Chair. All right, seeing no further questions or remarks, I want to thank you for being here, and before I let you go, there's a question we ask of all our nominees: Is there anything in your background, Mr. Westerson, that you believe might be embarrassing to either the State of Connecticut, the Governor, or this Committee.

GRANT WESTERSON: I don't think so, no.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Well, thank you very much. And that concludes the interviews of the nominees which brings us to the public portion of the meeting. Is there anyone here who would like to speak either pro or con on any of the nominees? Madam Clerk, is there any written communication?

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All right, since there's no written testimony or no personal testimony, then we'll proceed to the business portion of our meeting.

The first nominee is David Kooris of Stamford to be member of the Board of Directors at the Connecticut Port Authority. Is there a motion to that effect? It has been properly moved by Senator Duff. Is there a second? It has been seconded by Representative Yaccarino. Will Madam Clerk please take the role?

Duff-Yes. Vargas-Yes. Looney-Yes. Phipps-Yes. Fasano-Yes. Perillo-Yes. Bergstein. Davis. D'Agostino. DiMassa. Formica. Godfrey. Hartley. Kushner. Moore. Verrengia. Witkos. Yaccarino

REP. VARGAS (6TH): As discussed is customary, we will keep the votes open until 4 p.m., and that brings us to the last nominee before us, Mr. Grant W. Westerson of Old Saybrook, Connecticut, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Connecticut Port Authority. Do I have a motion to that effect? It has been properly moved by Representative Perillo. Is there a second? It has been seconded by Senator Looney. And since we have had no change in Committee members, is there any change from the previous vote from any Committee member? If not, will Madam Clerk reflect a Yea vote on behalf of Mr. Westerson?

Well, thank you very much, and could you please let us know when our next meeting is, Madam Clerk?

WENDY FRITZ: That will be on the 25th and another on the 27th. Both will be Judicial Review Council.

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REP. VARGAS (6TH): So, we have a meeting next Tuesday and next Thursday, both at 11 o'clock in this room. Well, thank you very much, Madam Clerk, and that concludes our business for today.