

Draft Minutes

Special Meeting of the
Middlesex Planning Commission

Public Presentation
Walkable Middlesex Village (Public Presentation)

Wednesday, July 8, 2020
6:00 PM

Due to restrictions on public gatherings as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, these hearings were held remotely via the town's Zoom account and telephone.

Planning Commission Members Present

Sandy Levine

Elias Gardner

Theo Kennedy

Mitch Osiecki

(Dick Alderman – Absent)

Guests:

Chris Sargent (Dubois & King)

Dayton Crites (Dubois & King)

Mike Pelchar (resident)

Ashley Bishop (VTrans)

CTO at 6:05

Planning Commission members were introduced; guests were welcomed and introduced.

MPG Update

Presentation of initial stages of project led by Dayton & Chris.

Phase I

Trail and Center – strong desire for the eventual development of a scenic overlook/Riverwalk along at least part of the Winooski. May prove to be a longer-term project.

Phase II

Walk to Market – for an initial step, would like to develop a walking path along the south side Route 2, ideally from Camp Meade campus to the Roots Market.

Phase III

Redevelopment – longer term redevelopment might include additional walkway/path on the north side of Route 2, along with additional development (on-street parking, bumpouts, trees and additional landscaping).

Design Constraints discussed

Power poles, slopes & drainage, 50' right-of-way (in general, details are vague for some stretches of highway)

Concept Section A

State Highway Walk

Concept Section B

Town Center Street – more involved effort; would require private/public partnership to fully realize.

Discussion of advantages of reclassifying Route 2 as a Class 1 roadway.

Town would assume ownership/maintenance, but town would gain a great deal of flexibility in determining use of the road: design control, crosswalks, speed limits, placement of signs, etc.

Design Concept

Town Center – Phase I

- two-sided design in the village center
- sidewalk on both sides of the road
- crosswalk near Gallagher Road
- better definition of entrances and exits
- trees
- on-street parking
- bumpouts (similar to renovations currently underway in Waterbury)

Theo would like to explore the possibility of adding on-street parking even if we if we don't go in the direction of Class 1 designation.

Ashley Bishop suggested that is a viable option. VTrans sometimes works out a maintenance agreement with towns. As long as the state can plow the 15' width of the highway, they could allow towns to design on-street parking, as long as the town manages the maintenance of the parking sections of the roadway.

Question from Sandy: are there examples in which a private property owner manages maintenance of the right-of-way?

Response from Ashley: State usually enters into a maintenance agreement with the town. Towns sometimes enter into a secondary agreement with private partners for maintenance of sections of roadway. The Town of Hinesburg may have such an arrangement with a private partner.

Question from Sandy: Does VTrans have the responsibility to accommodate other (non-motorized) modes of transportation within their right-of-way?

Response from Ashley: VTrans does take alternative modes of transportation into account when they undertake large-scale redesign projects. But not necessarily when the scope is a smaller-scale "surface leveling."

Question from Theo: If town adds a bike path and/or sidewalk outside the state's right-of-way, is there anything to prevent a public/private partnership to develop a path for non-motorized traffic?

Response from Ashley: State would have no concerns about development outside of their right-of-way.

Question from Mike: Do prospects exist for introducing so-called traffic-calming elements without seeking Class 1 designation?

Response from Dayton: Numerous studies have been done to learn what elements effectively calm traffic. The most effective means seem to center around the idea of narrowing the visual field that drivers see. Physical narrowing of the roadway is the most direct and effective method. But introducing visual elements to both sides of the road can also provide cues to drivers that they can't drive as quickly.

Question from Mike: If the state maintains control of the stretch of roadway through the village, would it still be possible to construct a crosswalk?

Response from Dayton: Yes, a crosswalk could still be constructed, but the town would likely have to make that case to VTrans that a crosswalk is warranted. That may well require a detailed study or "Class 1 analysis."

Chris comments that if Class 1 designation is granted, the state uses a formula to determine the amount of aid allocated to the town to help defray cost of maintenance. The state aid won't cover the entire cost of maintenance, but will help defray some of the costs.

Question from Elias: any examples of a town gaining Class 1 designation and later requesting to reverse that designation?

Response from Ashley: Can't immediately think of an example where this has happened. Should assume it to be an unlikely occurrence.

Design Concept: Walk to Market & Art Park

Potential for some overflow parking here. A potential obstacle might be RR right-of-way in this area.

Walk to Market (Church Street to Roots Market)

Continuing a sidewalk along the south side down Church Street has a couple of potential obstacles that may have to be overcome. There is a driveway that would be crossed, which would have to be restored to at least its original condition. Also, due to slope of land, a minor retaining wall would likely be necessary. There would also be the need to manage the slope of the sidewalk down the hill to Church Street to maintain ADA compliance.

Request was made to pass along contact info for owners of Art Park and Roots market to Chris & Dayton. Follow-up needed?

River Walk

There is definitely some support for the concept of a River Walk from end of Church Street (or GMP area) to at least the Planetary Matters campus. Would almost certainly involve some sort of partnership between GMP and a private landowner; GMP is open to discussion.

Chris cautions that due to cost constraints, the current project doesn't include a scoping study. We may have to make plans to include a scoping study in a future phase of this project.

We will most likely have to identify some alternative funding sources for some phases of this project.

With no additional comments or questions, the presentation concluded at 7:20p.m.

Chris Sargent, Dayton Crites, Ashley Bishop and Mike Pelchar left the meeting.

Other Business

Minutes of July 1 meeting.

Theo moved to approve minutes of July 1; Elias seconded. Theo, Elias, Mitch, Sandy voted in favor.

Motion carried 4-0-1.

Enhanced Energy Plan

The draft Enhance Energy Plan and Report are essentially ready to present to the Select Board. Theo described a few cosmetic edits he will make.

Sandy moved to accept the Report with edits Theo mentioned and present to the Select Board; Elias seconded. Theo, Elias, Sandy, and Mitch voted in favor. **Motion carried 4-0-1.**

Upcoming schedule:

July 15: Regular monthly meeting. Zoning: review priorities, including Clare's list of suggestions.

July 29: Public Presentation of Village Design grant project.

Sandy commented that it would be great to develop a list of residents of Middlesex village, with the intention of mailing invitations to the public presentation on July 29. Mitch and Elias will work on this.

Adjournment

Motion: Mitch moved to adjourn; Elias seconded. **Motion carried 4-0-1.**

Meeting adjourned at 7:44 pm.