

Draft Minutes

Special Meeting of Middlesex Planning Commission

Wednesday, September 1, 2021 – 6:00 PM

Middlesex Town Hall & Remote via Zoom

Planning Commission Members Present

Sandy Levine, Chair

Elias Gardner, Vice-Chair

Theo Kennedy

Phil Comen

Mitch Osiecki

Guests:

Dayton Crites – DuBois & King

Julia Ursaki – DuBois & King

Russ Bennet (Planetary Matters)

Mike Pelchar (Planetary Matters), resident

Peggy Leon, resident

Jon Udis, resident

Emily Smith, resident

David Lawrence, resident

Dave Shepard, resident

Michael Levine, resident

Luc Bernier, resident

Nicholas Hecht, Mill Art Garden

CTO: Sandy Levine called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Sandy conducted a roll call (all Planning Commission members present) and introduced members of the Planning Commission. Guest were also welcomed to the meeting.

Dayton Crites introduced himself and gave a brief overview of the ongoing scoping study.

A brief review of past efforts focused on the Middlesex Village:

- 2003 Community Design Charrette;
- What's Next Middlesex Community Forum in 2018;
- Revised Town Plan and Village Center Designation in 2019;
- Walkable Middlesex Study in 2020.

Conceptual ideas explored in the Walkable Middlesex Study included:

- Sidewalk design in Middlesex Village;
- Connecting the Middlesex Village to the Walter Kelley Park.

Dayton concluded by reviewing the purpose of a scoping study.

Comments from Russ Bennett: Noted that some sections along Route 2 have enough room to accommodate bike lanes and sidewalks along both sides of the road. In some sections, a sidewalk may only be needed on one side of the road. Believes the state right-of-way should be sufficient to provide safe bike lanes on both sides of the road.

Dayton then ran through a brief discussion of:

- Historic Structures;
- Sight Distances;
- Roadway Constraints;
- Private Property;
- Trail types: paved, natural surfaces, gravel (lots of options).

Concluded with a broad list of design possibilities:

- Streetscape Improvements;
- Sidewalk Improvements;
- Bike Parking;
- Rain Gardens;
- Pedestrian Islands;
- Wayfinding Signs;
- Bulb outs.

The floor was opened to discussion from community members.

Emily Smith: How do villages like Waitsfield and Moretown manage speed limits of 30 MPH?

Response from Dayton: A number of ways, but primarily visual cues. Added that, when a community wishes to consider changing local speed limits, a requirement is that a speed study be conducted. The speed limit will have to match the 80th percentile of the traffic in the speed study. Should think carefully before undergoing this process. Posted speed limits have limited ability to change behavior of motorists. The town would likely have to increase enforcement in order to compel compliance.

Russ Bennett: Town can hire a sheriff. There will be some initial resistance, but will change behavior over time. Will generate the town a little revenue, too.

Dave Shepard: (In reference to a parcel of land between Middlesex Village and Walter Kelley Park) Will VTrans be supportive of a trail or recreation path on their property?

Response: Possibly. It's worth exploring.

Mike Pelchar: Will bulb outs cause issues with VTrans maintenance of Route 2?

Response: Features such as bulb outs can be used, but will have to meet state requirements for lane width.

Peggy Leon: Still opposed to a sidewalk on her property. Believes her neighbors feel likewise.

Response: Your concerns are noted.

Russ Bennett: Suspects that there is space on both sides of Route 2, within state's right-of-way, for sidewalks that local property owners may not be fully aware of. Added that this stretch of Route 2 is due for a repaving project within the next few years and wondered if some slight re-alignment of the road might allow some additional flexibility. Suggested that the neighbors most directly impacted by sidewalks might want to get together and see where their common goals might intersect.

[unnamed representative from Methodist Church]: Offered that members of the church are interested in exploring what they might do to increase their involvement in the community. Members hope to rebuild and are open to various concepts. Community Center?

Dayton concluded by reminding attendees of ongoing efforts to collect additional feedback. Posters will be going up shortly in hopes of furthering community engagement.

Reminder that we've posted a Walkable Middlesex Survey (on What's Next Middlesex website and elsewhere) to solicit feedback. Tell your friends!

Sandy thanked attendees for taking the time to participate in this forum. Noted that after a short break, the Planning Commission will convene to conduct some additional business.

This portion of the meeting adjourned at 6:50 pm.

Minutes 9/1

1. Following the Community Forum, PC members briefly met. We were joined by Luc Bernier and Jeff Harvey. Mitch left the meeting.
2. The proposed CVRPC contract for zoning work was discussed. PC members were pleased with the work CVRPC had done on the last segments of the zoning update and supported moving forward with the contract for this fiscal year.
3. Updates:
 - a. Energy Plan -- Theo shared recent draft with highlights of areas where there are changes from the draft the PC previously adopted. PC members should review and be ready to vote on at next meeting so we can meet the timeline for a vote at Town Meeting.
 - b. Better Places Grant -- Sandy summarized status. Waiting for agreement on easement language. Dept of Health provided verbal approval for an extension to complete work by end of Sept and revised contract will be provided to Selectboard when it is received.
 - c. Subdivision -- Application from Stewart for major subdivision on Chase Road. Agreed to schedule for Oct 13. Sandy will talk to ZA &/or counsel about getting the additional information from applicant that is needed to meet major subdivision req'ts either before or at hearing.
4. Luc Bernier -- recent UVM grad interested in volunteering on projects to use GIS experience & expertise. He has worked with VTrans. One possibility is to better identify the river trail route. Next step is to arrange a call with Luc, Sandy & Dayton to figure if this can fit in with the project.
5. Next meeting Sept 15.
6. Schedule -- Elias received feedback that Community Forum conflicted with School Board meeting. He asked if we / the Town can have or develop a community calendar so we know when meetings are, so as to avoid future conflicts.
7. Adjourn 7:20 pm.