

# Draft Minutes

**Special Meeting of the  
Middlesex Planning Commission  
Public Presentation of  
Walkable Middlesex Village Design**

**Wednesday, July 29, 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 – D & K  
Dayton Crites – D & K  
Ashley Bishop – VTrans

Middlesex Residents:

Dave Smith  
Susan Sussman

Scudder Parker  
Mike Pelchar  
Mike Kline  
Michael Levine  
Susan Clark  
Larry Becker  
George Longenecker

CTO at 6:00

Guests were welcomed to the meeting.

## **Presentation of Walkable Village Design Plan**

Led by Chris Sargent and Dayton Crites of Dubois & King.

Introduction and broad Concept Plans

A Final Design will be presented to the Select Board at a date to be determined, most likely in October. The final design will include some Design Alternatives where viable alternatives may be under consideration.

### Constraints:

- Power Poles
- Slopes & Drainage
- 50' VTrans Right-of-way (likely the largest obstacle)

Discussion of Class 1 Designation. Significant decision the town will have to make.

Two examples:

Hinesburg does not have a Class 1 Designation;

Randolph & Waterbury both have Class 1 Designation

### Next Steps:

- Input from town residents
- Refine Design
- Consider Alternatives

We've posted a short survey at [bit.ly/middlesexvillage](http://bit.ly/middlesexvillage)

Will try to regularly promote the survey on Front Porch Forum (and possibly elsewhere).

Discussion opened to Questions:

Dave Smith: Are there any comparable towns that have recently undertaken a similar project?

Response: Hinesburg, without Class 1 designation. But they were able to add on-street parking. Also, Danville – again without Class 1 Designation, but they were able to add a few amenities.

Comment from Susan Sussman: Hinesburg doesn't "feel" like a village.

Scudder Parker: How much outreach has been done with village landowners? Have they expressed interest in the project?

Response: There have been initial conversations with several folks, including: Planetary Matters (Camp Meade), Francis Foundation, Green Mountain Power, and Roy Chmeilewski. Of those approached

thus far, certainly some interest. But we haven't contacted all residents yet. There are certainly more conversations to be had.

The area where a sidewalk is proposed includes lands of six property owners. Because of constraints with respect to the VTrans ROW, those owners will certainly need to be involved in any decision regarding the potential for a sidewalk.

There is a good deal of ahead to explain the concept of a Riverwalk in town. Planetary Matters is interested in the concept, and their support is crucial, but additional buy-in from others will also be necessary.

Mike Pelchar mentioned that a scenic overlook at the end of Church Street had previously mentioned as a design alternative. Curious if that's still on the table?

Response: Yes, that remains an option.

Ashley Bishop explained that Class 1 Designation projects always include clear "bookends," that is, well-defined starting and ending points. The design under consideration currently would incorporate the area from the Roots Market to just past the Camp Meade campus.

It would be possible to extend the Class 1 area out to I-89/Center Road, which would increase costs slightly.

Susan Sussman: Asks for a little more detail about Class 1 Designation.

Response (Dayton): In towns that have successfully developed an area that "feels" like a village, such projects have almost always incorporated a Class 1 Designation. Class 1 Designation gives the town more control over design principles and amenities offered.

Ashley Bishop offered further details of what the state requires of towns that have sought Class 1 Designation. Easily the most significant aspect of this designation is that the town would assume responsibility for plowing that portion of the road covered by the Class 1 Designation. State plow equipment needs a wider clearance than what is typically available when towns seek to design the roadway with "village" amenities.

Mike Pelchar commented that Planetary Matters supports traffic-calming design concepts such as bump-outs and on-street parking. Are there other techniques that might be employed?

Response (Dayton): Those two are often the most effective.

Chris added that reducing the speed limit is generally ineffective on its own. Irrespective of a posted speed limit, most people will drive the speed that "seems reasonable." Adding elements of visual interest or otherwise "visual narrowing" is more effective than reducing the speed limit.

Mike Kline: If plowing falls to the town, that will presumably also include removal of snow accumulation.

Response: Correct.

Michael Levine: Have there been any conversations yet with the owners of the Roots Market?  
Response: We've reached out to them and they've indicated interest in discussing the project. But this time of year is pretty busy for them, so no substantive conversations to report at this time.

Michael comments that the Roots Market folks be approached to gain their buy-in before the project moves forward too far.

Dave Smith: Commented that reaching out to residents in the village is at least as important as talking to business owners.

Response: Sandy Levine, speaking on behalf of the PC, agrees. PC has discussed internally that it's important to involve local residents. It is a little more challenging to connect with folks in the COVID-era.

Susan Clark: Commented that people have been trying to develop the village for decades, but nothing much has happened yet. She urges that we focus on the economic benefits of a well-developed village.

Response: Chris and Dayton thanked Susan for the observation and agree that the economic benefits are a crucial selling point.

Larry Becker: Commented that he hadn't heard much about this project previously, but is interested and excited about the possibilities.

George Longenecker: Commented that he and Larry represent the Conservation Commission. They will be watching developments with interest.

Theo Kennedy: Commented that he's optimistic about the prospects of something positive coming from this work, but sees no reason that it should take decades for benefits to be seen. He believes there are people with vision and energy involved and that progress should be much quicker.

Michael Levine: Asked if this presentation can be posted on social media/FPF. Possibly a way to promote this project to people who haven't yet been engaged.

Mike Pelchar: Wants to know what the next step?

Response (Dayton): Will take feedback from tonight and refine possible design options.

A final draft report will identify options, costs, overview of action items that can be done on a grass-roots level while the longer-term options are being developed.

A scoping study would likely be an early step. Much of this current project will directly support a future scoping study. Important to note that the current project also includes identification of potential funding sources.

Dave Smith: Commented that there seems to be a lot of emphasis on Class 1 Designation. Feels that even a smaller project, without seeking Class 1 Designation could have great appeal to village residents.

Sandy thanked all for joining and for their willingness to share thoughts on this project.

Ashley Bishop reiterated that discussion of Class 1 Designation should be viewed as a long-term conversation. Towns don't have to make a decision about seeking or declining Class 1 Designation hastily. The state wants to engage thoughtfully with towns to explore such options and hopes to be viewed as a partner, not as an adversary.

### **Adjournment**

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

Meeting adjourned at 7:19 pm.