

NOTE: These Minutes are subject to Committee approval at its next regular meeting.

Chester Main Street Project Committee  
Regular Meeting, February 11, 2014  
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1. Call to Order

The Chester Main Street Project Committee held its regular meeting on Tuesday, February 11, 2014, at the Chester Town Hall, 203 Middlesex Avenue, Chester, Connecticut. Chairman Joplin called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

2. Seating of Members

Those members in attendance were Michael Joplin, Steven Tiezzi, Al Bisacky, Virgil Lloyd, John Schroeder, John King (arrived at 7:15 PM), Charlene Janecek, Chuck Mueller and Leslie Strauss. First Selectman Ed Meehan, Brian Kent and Gary Giroux were also present. There were approximately 10 citizens also in attendance.

4. Discussion on the Committee level of comments from the public presentation held January 29, 2014 concentrating on the issue of location of sidewalk (and possible relocation) on north side vs. south side of Main Street in and around the area of School Lane. A public presentation on this issue will be held at a future date, said date to be determined.

Chairman Joplin noted the main topic of discussion at this meeting was the sidewalk up Main Street, the controversial part being the area in front of Chesterfield's and School Lane. The Committee had asked Messrs. Kent and Giroux to analyze the cost of moving the sidewalk from one side of the street to the other and what could and couldn't be done in terms of ADA compliance, trees, curbs, retaining walls, etc.

Chairman Joplin noted the Committee would accept limited public comment toward the end of the meeting.

Chairman Joplin noted it has been learned this week the Library has decided its not appropriate to expand on that site and have shown an interest in moving to North Quarter Park. This is one of the elements being drawn into this discussion as it could necessitate a sidewalk from the Village to Route 154.

Brian Kent noted they have identified the best way to cross over Main Street at the School Lane intersection, looked at comparative costs and what would be involved in constructing a sidewalk on the south side (option 1). He noted approximately 45 to 50 feet of the new sidewalk on the south side would be too low so part of the wall would have to be reconstructed. The rest of the wall could stay. Option 2 would stay on the north side and continue the sidewalk all the way to North Quarter Park. Mr. Kent indicated there was very little difference in costs between the two options (\$13,000 for the north side). It is a small amount in the scheme of things when Phase 1 from the Cemetery to Route 154 is \$1.2 million.

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There was discussion regarding the width of the sidewalk. Mr. Kent noted it should be 5 feet but it is possible to make it narrower in sections. Mr. Bisacky noted minimum width is 3 feet and every 200 feet is a 5 foot node. Mr. Kent noted the existing sidewalk is 3 feet wide with a strip of grass. Its difficult to maintain so the consensus was to eliminate the strip and widen the sidewalk. Another option is to eliminate the strip and narrow the sidewalk making space for trees and conditions that want to be preserved.

Steven Tiezzi noted the center of town is more of an urban fabric having the sidewalk narrower and not in scale with the residential nature. He asked if this could be designed to widen the driveways which might be a good compromise to save some trees. In the area of the Meads and Gates, this might also allow more space for buffers and grade changes. Chairman Joplin noted he agreed provided this still qualifies for a STEAP Grant. Mr. Kent noted in some cases signage will be installed in the sidewalk.

Chuck Mueller agreed the goal should be to make the sidewalk less than 5 feet where possible. Gary Giroux noted the Road Regulations call for a 4 foot sidewalk.

Virgil Lloyd noted there currently is an existing sidewalk for 90% of the length of the road. He further noted this project has grown quite a bit in scale from where it was.

Mr. Kent noted there can't be both the grass strip and the 5 foot sidewalk.

Steven Tiezzi asked if the sidewalk needs to be replaced because of different levels. Mr. Lloyd noted he walks the sidewalk quite a bit and is concerned something is being fixed that is not a high priority on Main Street. Tiezzi further noted a lot of the sidewalk needs to be replaced and is it going to be a 50 foot section here and there.

Mr. Lloyd also noted he was concerned that none of the work at the Laurel Hill Cemetery Parking Lot was included in the \$5.5 million.

Chairman Joplin noted he was in favor of replacing the whole sidewalk but perhaps some of it could be 3 1/2 or 4 feet wide. Mr. Kent noted they are currently looking at design ideas, costs and safety and don't want to lead the town down the wrong path or make something that is unsafe.

Virgil Lloyd noted there is an existing situation already. He asked why we should mess with the sidewalk other than the places where it is broken and needs repair.

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First Selectman Meehan noted he would like to see a cross section of the 45 feet of wall that would have to be removed. There was further discussion regarding repairing/rebuilding the wall.

Mr. Tiezzi noted the best thing for the Town and the safest route should be used.

Gary Giroux reviewed cross sections of the School Lane intersection and the retaining walls. There was much discussion regarding the location of the crosswalk. Giroux noted the crosswalk should be as perpendicular as possible and should have a 5' x 5' platform.

Mr. Kent noted anything that is done will impact the trees on the corner. Chairman Joplin asked what impact the movement of the road and installation of a new granite curb would have on the trees. Mr. Kent noted any excavation under the trees will disturb the roots. Installation of the sewer line a few years ago impacted the roots. This project will have an impact but don't think it would be a fatal impact.

Chairman Joplin asked if curbs needed to be installed at all. Mr. Kent noted it was the wish of the Committee to correct drainage issues. John King noted he was concerned the curbing would make Main Street look like a bowling alley.

Steven Tiezzi asked if it would be safer to have only one crosswalk at Chesterfield's. Mr. Giroux noted the least number of times one has to cross the main travel way, the safer it is. He also noted its always safer to cross at a controlled intersection.

John Schroeder noted he was glad the Committee was having this conversation but it didn't occur back in January. Everyone can now hear the pros and cons of different scenarios as well as fellow citizens concerns.

Steven Tiezzi noted if the sidewalk went on the north side there are two properties in particular. Could there be a satisfactory design that would satisfy the concerns of those property owners. First Selectman Meehan noted he followed up with a letter to the Meads last Friday but hasn't heard back from them. However, in talking with the Meads, Meehan noted they understood the town's goals for restoration and landscaping. There was discussion regarding the Meads sidewalk. Mr. Kent noted the sidewalk could be tapered down.

There was much discussion regarding the grade and elevations at the corner of School Lane and Main Street. Mr. Bisacky noted the trees would have to go.

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Mr. Tiezzi asked what could be done in front of the Gates property to make it favorable. Mr. Mueller noted the sidewalk could be 3 feet and a sound and safety barrier could be installed. Mr. Kent noted the hedge is about 5 feet thick and occupies the entire right-of-way. He also noted the porch at the western corner is about 8 or 9 feet to the property line. Mr. Kent noted the proposed road width at that area was 24 feet. There was discussion about possibly narrowing the road somewhat. Messrs. King, Bisacky and Kent all noted the travel portion of the lane could be 10 feet. First Selectman Meehan noted there needs to be a place for snow. This is a collector road and he would like to see it at 24 feet. This road connects a State Highway to a State Highway.

Leslie Strauss noted she would like to discuss further the option of eliminating the grass strip, avoiding the 5 foot standard and doing right by these two stakeholders. Charlene Janecek and Chuck Mueller agreed with Leslie Strauss. John Schroeder noted the Committee must consider all the other variables. Virgil Lloyd noted he agreed with John and just because a crossing is being eliminated, it doesn't make it safer. A sidewalk is being put in right on the edge of the road. Sidewalk ADA compliance was reviewed. Virgil Lloyd noted a lot of the quiriness and patina of Chester is being changed.

First Selectman Meehan noted there are catch basins in front of Chesterfield's that had 2 feet of leaves piled on top of them. He indicated safety is what drives the design. The Committee is trying to make accommodations and ignoring safety. He further noted the sidewalks are a disaster and a trip hazard. The Town has to do the right thing for public safety.

Chuck Mueller noted from a planning standpoint this has to be good for the town for decades and decades in the future.

Discussion continued with regards to the Gates property, narrowing the sidewalk and location of crosswalks.

Chuck Mueller noted no one likes change. He encouraged the Committee to think of 4 new trees as a different kind of wonderful and new sound, safety and visual barrier and that serves the same purpose and provides more space for the property owner.

Chairman Joplin took a straw poll of those in favor of putting the sidewalk on the north side of the street.

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John King was opposed to a sidewalk on the north side and the cutting of the trees. To speculate the Library and future development at NQP was ridiculous. He suggested the Town purchase 137 Main Street if it ever came up for sale.

Virgil Lloyd was against moving the sidewalk to the north side and agreed with John King. He stated the concern of property owners is a huge weight. The Committee has focused on putting in a 5 foot wide sidewalk and it now finds out that is not the case. The Committee should look at narrowing the sidewalk and fixing the sidewalks on the south side.

Al Bisacky noted he was concerned that not just this area was going to change. The Committee hasn't talked about the rest of the plan in front of the Post Office and Jacobson's. He indicated six months ago this was a public works project and now we have a subdivision going in here. It will look quite different. He noted the sidewalk needs to be where it is now. A lot of changes are being proposed and a lot of money being spent. This will either be widely accepted or widely rejected and if rejected, it could effect the rest of the project which is downtown Main Street. He was concerned about raising the funds for the project. He felt the sidewalk should remain where it is now and made safe. He was worried about how much money is being spent.

Steven Tiezzi noted everyone has concerns about making the right decisions. The goal has always been to keep the charm of Chester, improve it where it can be improved and make it more of what it is. This section of Main Street right now is a good Phase 1 but potentially dangerous. A lot of concerns have been brought up tonight and the Committee is really scrutinizing things. He noted the road will get a new topping, but didn't think great changes were made to the appearance of the Town. He felt the access to North Quarter Park on the north side was the right plan with all due respect to those properties effected. Hopefully a design can be achieved that will be acceptable to the property owners.

Leslie Strauss felt it would be a great improvement to the greater good of the people of the Town not going back and forth across the street. There difference in money is not that much. She noted she would like to see a variable width of sidewalk on the north side.

John Schroeder noted he was in favor of the south side and wanted to make sure everyone present got an opportunity to speak if they chose to do so.

First Selectman Meehan noted the Committee will vote and make a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen. From a long range public improvement, he felt the north

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side was the right thing to do. Other things could also be done like tightening up the project so it doesn't overwhelm everyone, going with a 3 foot sidewalk in permitted areas would be prudent and mitigation with adjacent property owners.

Charlene Janecek was in favor of the north side. People already walk in that yard because they don't want to walk in the road. The hedge is going to go anyway. She advocated working with the property owners to mitigate removal of the hedge, etc.

Chuck Mueller noted the north side was the right way to go. He disagreed with trying to be too timid with this phase.

Chairman Joplin noted he would be in favor of staying on the north side in terms of long range planning. These decisions are being made for our children who will be ones to benefit. Planning is a 50, 60 or 70 year view. The sidewalks being used now were put in during the Depression, some 80 or 90 years ago. He also stated he values those trees and landscaping and its not easy to say those trees must come down but its contrary to a 75 year view.

The Committee agreed it would like to see a sketch of both the north and south side of the sidewalk, including plan view, curbs, limits of grading and what trees would have to come down. A photo shop rendition would be fine. There was discussion about where the 3 foot sidewalk sections would be located. Mr. Bisacky noted he would also like to see the area between the Post Office and Jacobson's in 10 scale. Virgil Lloyd noted he would like to see some variation of keeping the sidewalk where it is.

It was decided March 4th would be the next Committee meeting where Messrs. Kent and Giroux would have these sections and sketches.

5. Approval of Minutes – January 14, 2014 and January 28, 2014 Regular Meeting Minutes, January 29, 2014 Special Meeting Minutes, January 29, 2014 Public Information Meeting Minutes

**Motion by Lloyd, second by Strauss, to approve January 14, 2014 Minutes amended as follows -**

- **Under 5. Review of Critical Issues, Laurel Hill Cemetery – 1st paragraph, add new sentence toward end of paragraph during discussion of utilities, "Steven Tiezzi asked if the utilities companies had been contacted and it was reported they had not."**
- **Under 5. Review of Critical Issues, 10th paragraph, last sentence**

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should read, "The smaller radii slows down traffic."  
Voting in favor – Lloyd, Strauss, Tiezzi, Bisacky, Schroeder, King, Janecek, Mueller, Joplin. Opposed – none. Motion Carried.

Motion by Tiezzi, second by Strauss, to approve January 28, 2014 Minutes as written. Voting in favor – Tiezzi, Strauss, Schroeder, King, Mueller, Joplin. Opposed – none. Abstained – Lloyd, Janecek, Bisacky. Motion Carried.

The January 29, 2014 Special Meeting and Public Information Meeting Minutes were tabled.

#### 6. Approval of Bills

Motion by Strauss, second by Janecek, to approve for payment invoices from Kent & Frost in the amounts of \$12,090.98 dated 1/17/14 and \$14,446.57 dated 2/7/14. Discussion followed. Both Strauss and Janecek agreed to amend the motion to read "to approve for payment invoices from Kent & Frost in the amounts of \$12,090.98 dated 1/17/14 and \$14,446.57 dated 2/7/14 with the understanding Brian Kent will submit the following information to committee members – 1) additional survey info, 2) drainage calculations, 3) .pdf of schematic design drawings, and 4) cost estimates. Voting in favor – Strauss, Janecek, King, Schroeder, Bisacky, Lloyd, Tiezzi, Mueller, Joplin. Opposed – none. Motion Carried.

Motion by Mueller, second by Bisacky, to approve invoice of J. Brown Associates for secretarial services in the amount of \$1,237.50. Voting in favor – Mueller, Bisacky, Janecek, Strauss, Lloyd, King, Schroeder, Tiezzi, Joplin. Opposed – none. Motion Carried.

#### 7. Other Business – none.

#### 8. Next Meetings – February 25, 2014 w/DOT and March 4, 2014 Committee 3. Discussion re future meeting with ConnDOT relative to Main Street Bridge Replacement Project

It was decided the next regular meeting to be held on February 25, 2014 would be with the ConnDOT to discuss the Main Street Bridge Replacement Project. First Selectman Meehan will contact Dave Stanke from TransSystems to confirm the date. Al Bisacky asked if anyone has seen the plans. Mr. Stanke should give the Committee a presentation as to where they are in the design process and there should be discussion regarding materials, such as cobblestone and pavers.

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It was agreed the next meeting of the Committee after February 25th will be Tuesday, March 4, 2014, at Chester Town Hall.

#### 9. Audience of Citizens

Steve Holmes asked the Committee to keep in mind that the public does not want the northern sidewalk. The public will no doubt be out at the next public information meeting. He stated its not just about the trees but also 137 Main Street. He also stated he a walks to North Quarter Park with a stroller and has no problem crossing the street.

Lillian Bella stated she heard there was the possibility of the Library and a new Community Center going at North Quarter Park. She also asked why a sidewalk would be necessary on the north side if the Park was going to stay a children's playground. She further stated she would be reluctant to make a decision until it is known whether the Library and Community Center are going to be at North Quarter Park.

Mrs. Gates, 137 Main Street, stated she was disheartened on how this impacts their property. They made a big long term investment by moving to Chester and had long range plans. They are parents and deal with change all the time. She stated this will have a great impact on their property. Stepping off their steps on to a tiny space of grass and then a big sidewalk changes the whole feel of their home.

Mr. Gates, 137 Main Street, stated Chester has a unique character, elegance, artfulness and imperfection. This modernization plan will skew this balance. He further stated as one turns off Route 154 going into town there is quite the experience of foliage. He restated that he felt this tree canopy provides a certain amount of sun screening for drivers and if taken down may create a safety issue for sun glare.

Henry Krempel asked if any consideration had been given to connecting the Maple Street Parking Lot Pathway to the Post Office. He stated the property owners on the south side of the street are much more happy with the notion of having a side walk than those property owners on the north side. Chairman Joplin noted the utility poles are on the south side of the street and moving them for a sidewalk would be prohibitively costly.

Chairman Joplin read into the record a letter from Diane Lindsay, 32 Winthrop Road, dated February 5, 2014, thanking the Committee for its work and for the public presentation on January 29th.



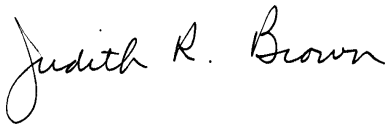
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10. Adjournment

**Motion by Tiezzi, second by Bisacky, to adjourn at 10:00 PM. Voting in favor – Tiezzi, Bisacky, Janecek, Strauss, King, Schroeder, Lloyd, Mueller, Joplin. Opposed – none. Motion Carried.**

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Judith R. Brown". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the text "Respectfully submitted,".

Judith R. Brown, Recording Secretary