

1. Call to Order

The Chester Main Street Project Committee held its regular meeting on Tuesday, March 11, 2014, at the Chester Town Hall, 203 Middlesex Avenue, Chester, Connecticut. Chairman Joplin called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

2. Seating of Members

In attendance were Michael Joplin, Steven Tiezzi, John Schroeder, Charlene Janecek, Chuck Mueller and Leslie Strauss. Brian Kent, Gary Giroux, First Selectman Ed Meehan and about 25 citizens were also present.

3. Review of Project Area, specifically the following –

Chairman Joplin noted tonight's agenda included review of public improvements from approximately 123 Main and School Lane to Route 154 (sidewalk on north side vs. south side, crosswalk locations, reconstruction or removal of walls), orientation, elevation and geometry of road between Laurel Hill Cemetery and Post Office and material specifications for Main Street Bridge improvements in center of Town which is 1 1/2 years away. He noted he would ask for public comment after the first two items and was not sure the last item would be discussed depending on the time.

(a) area around School Lane and the question of the sidewalk on the north side vs. the south side

Brian Kent noted they looked at 4 points along Main Street that have been the topic of recent discussions. He reviewed the crosswalk west of the School Lane intersection noting it brings one directly in to a stone wall. Its an acute angle and not up to standard. This crosswalk needs to be perpendicular. He reviewed the existing conditions of that crosswalk and the upper wall which would have to be rebuilt. He noted that was not a recommended solution because of the cost of rebuilding that wall. It would have to be a 7' high retaining wall.

Mr. Kent noted moving east the crosswalk could be at the corner with a landing and crossing perpendicular.

Another scenario would be moving further east having a sidewalk on the north side connecting to the front door at 131 Main. Existing trees would be replaced with a set of new trees. There would be a 4' sidewalk on the north side. A walkway would run up to the house. There would be proposed landscaping improvements on both sides of a split rail fence. If the north side is selected, the crosswalk goes away and the crossing would be at the Chesterfield's parking lot.

Moving further east at 137 Main, Mr. Kent reviewed the existing condition with the hedge and sidewalk on south side. He noted the hedge would be removed. There would be a 4' wide sidewalk and fence with a strip of plantings. The fence would be paid for as part of this project.

Chairman Joplin asked what the average width of the sidewalk would be. Mr. Kent replied 4' with the exception of the area of the crosswalk where it is 5'. They are not recommending less than 4' unless there is an obstruction. The 5' section would occur at a crosswalk and curb ramp. A curb ramp occurs naturally at driveways.

Chairman Joplin asked about trees. Mr. Kent replied the Tree warden looked at the trees in this section. At 131 Main, the Maple tree is relatively healthy. The tree at Chesterfield's property is hanging over the driveway. The tree at 137 is not healthy but can remain for the time being until the Tree Warden determines it is hazardous. It's outside of the scope of work in that area. On the right-of-way between 137 and Main, there is another Maple the Tree Warden noted has issues. That will remain as it can be worked around.

Mr. Kent reviewed various species of replacement trees. There would be ornamental flowering trees on the south side. The north side could have far more larger trees because there are no power lines. Tree plantings would be intermittent and varied. In the case of 131, they are looking at 3 good size shade trees.

First Selectman Meehan asked if the sidewalk were to stay on the south side in its present location, is it the intent to lower the grade. Mr. Kent replied yes, the grade will be tapered up to the wall. Meehan asked what that does to the integrity of the foundation of the second wall. Mr. Kent noted they are trying to avoid that. The intention is to slope it up and reach existing grade at the base of the wall. Mr. Giroux noted they are trying to get a 3 to 1 slope.

First Selectman Meehan asked if the utility poles would have to be relocated. Mr. Giroux noted it looks like they will miss more of the poles than originally thought. The poles will stay as long as they don't interfere with the sidewalk location. There can be a 3' sidewalk around a pole.

John Schroeder noted in the 1st scenario the upper wall has to be rebuilt. He stated another option would be to leave the upper wall in place and create a new lower wall. Mr. Giroux noted rebuilding the lower wall would undermine the upper wall.

John Schroeder asked if the sidewalk is on the north side, what would happen to the lower retaining wall on the south side. It was noted the lower wall would be replaced with a new lower wall as it is not structurally safe. Mr. Giroux noted the lower wall will be rebuilt all the way down to the driveway. Mr. Schroeder noted then regardless of whether the sidewalk is on the north or south, the Town will be redoing the lower wall. Mr. Giroux noted the lower wall gets rebuilt and tapers back to the original wall.

First Selectman Meehan asked what happens to the fire hydrant. Mr. Kent replied the new sidewalk will pass in front of it.

Mr. Kent noted with regard to lighting, the objective is to work with what's existing and they are coordinating this with the Energy Team.

Mr. Kent noted the driveways would have a concrete apron. There won't be the current problems with asphalt coming apart. It will be a much more sustainable condition.

Leslie Strauss asked if any existing trees would be effected by the milling of the road. Mr. Kent noted there will be specific requirements on how to excavate around trees and they will be very careful around tree roots.

Chairman Joplin asked for public comment.

Joe Tomaszewski, 112 Main, asked if the sidewalk is on the north side, why does the big tree have to be removed. Mr. Kent explained the reasoning behind its removal adding that it could be left but it would be fatally wounded.

Mr. Kent reviewed ADA curb ramps and the 5' sidewalk at the crosswalk. He explained ADA requires every 200' there be a 5' sidewalk. Crossing on the eastern side of School Lane is a much better condition.

Erica Udoff, 122 Main, asked if it was possible to soften the height of Chesterfield's very high front yard and if the crosswalk could be next to her driveway crossing over to 123 Main instead of near School Lane. First Selectman Meehan noted a crosswalk needs to be at a stop bar and that location would be about 20' back. Mr. Kent further noted they couldn't change the grading of the front of the wall. Rebuilding walls is very expensive. There is a limited budget and that would take a big chunk of it for geotechnical investigations and engineering analysis, etc. Meehan also noted they would have to get grade and slope rights from Chesterfield's. It would change the whole appearance of entering Chester.

Virginia Carmany, 51 Middlesex, asked what telephone poles have to be relocated. Mr. Giroux noted there are potentially two poles in front of Chesterfield's.

Steven Holmes, 7 School Lane, noted it is safer to cross where there is a controlled stop sign. He asked what happens to the wall if the sidewalk is on the northern side. Chairman Joplin noted the lower wall has to be removed in either option. Mr. Holmes stated they have all pointed out how unfortunate it is to lose the large trees.

Steven Tiezzi noted currently there is a crosswalk at Chesterfield's parking lot. Someone going to North Quarter Park has to cross the street twice. It is more dangerous to do that. There currently is a beaten path on the northern side where people walk now.

Jeff Gates, 137 Main, noted during special events the street is crossed often and people walk in the street. He briefly reviewed a recent talk he attended by Chris Fletcher, arborist with Bartlett Tree Experts where the topic was sustainability and planting of trees. Lastly, Mr. Gates noted there are children that wait at the School Lane intersection. What are these going to be told when the crew comes in to cut down those beautiful trees?

Deborah Bilcheck, 23 Butter Jones, noted her children play at North Quarter Park and then go to Simon's or the ice cream store. She felt the 4th rendering was the one that provides the most feasibility in the crosswalk. She further noted with the speed limit there and children crossing the street, if someone doesn't use the exact margins of the crosswalk, they could walk into oncoming traffic. She suggested an accident reconstructionist do an evaluation on this.

Gary Meade, 123 Main, agreed the wall clearly has to be rebuilt. He asked if Chesterfield's have been approached on this matter. Mr. Kent noted both walls are entirely on Town property. Mr. Meade asked if the Town has approached Chesterfield's about sharing in the cost. First Selectman Meehan noted he has approached the site manager but did not get into any monetary discussions. They want to close off one part of the sidewalk but they will have to pay for that. They also want to cap the wall. Meehan noted when he has a better idea of what is going to be done, he will approach Chesterfield's and discuss their participation. Mr. Meade noted he has heard discussion about the Library going into North Quarter Park. He stated it was pretty closed off there with big bushes and trees. He asked if any of that would be dealt with. Mr. Meade asked about the NQP pathway going down to the Town center. He stated he was confused at this point as to what to support. Mr. Kent noted the concept of the loop has not gone away but could be a possible future project. They will do selective pruning and removal of invasive plants so people don't feel insecure walking there at night.

First Selectman Meehan noted about two weeks ago the Board of Selectmen recommended to the Board of Finance to allocate \$20,000 to retain a consultant to do a Master Plan for North Quarter Park. The driving force behind this was the relocation of the Library to NQP. This is not a new idea. It was in the Plan of Conservation & Development and also recommended by former First Selectman Marsh, a 1978 Study Committee and the 2003/2004 Town Office Building Committee. This information will be turned over to the consultant. He continued the sidewalk issue is important as far as safety on the north side. The row of arbor vitae will probably be removed in the Master Plan. The goal is to get this done by September in order to apply for the grant application. This is a long range plan and the Master Plan is the first step.

Chairman Joplin briefly reviewed a possible pathway from NQP crossing Chester

Creek to Carini Preserve ending up at the Water Street Parking Lot. These are all pieces being put together systemically. It will take another 10 or 12 years to see the whole thing come together. Joplin further noted it is because of the long range planning that he believes the sidewalk should be on the north side of the street as it will tie these elements of the community together.

Sarah Jansen, 1 Main, noted eliminating the hedge won't solve all the issues but suggested staying with the initial sidewalk and fixing it. That is a weird corner with a visual impact.

Susan Peck, 101 Main, noted she has lived in Chester for 14 years. She stated it makes no sense to her that there is not a continuous sidewalk up the north side of the street. To have to cross the street twice to get to NQP doesn't make a lot of sense.

Mrs. Gates, 137 Main, asked who would be responsible for the the sidewalk financially and maintenance. If it is decided to have duplicate sidewalks, how can this be a savings. How are we going to maintain two sidewalks. That would be a forever expense for taxpayers. Mr. Kent reviewed removal of the hedge and the new potential fence. He noted the fence would be given to the property owner and be just inside the property line. That would result in a space of 9 feet from the fence to the front porch.

Ken Lignar, 140 Main, noted he appreciates the difficulties of the Gates. He asked if the hedge is removed and the fence put up, is there any way the Town could help them move the steps to the other side of the porch so they don't have to walk right into the fence. Chairman Joplin agreed that is a reasonable request.

Virginia Carmany, 51 Middlesex, commended everyone on the Committee for putting up with all of them and appreciated all the work members have done. She stated her concern was cost and the way people feel. The cost issue comes up and she felt this would be too expensive for the Town's budget. In the future if trees die etc, that is the time to do the sidewalk in phases. She noted people have been crossing Main Street for years and it has not proven to be a dangerous endeavor and there have been no injuries. She encouraged the Committee to slow down and look at the vision for the next 20, 30, 40 years. To force this too fast, it is a lot of change.

Christian Splittgerber, 138 Goose Hill, noted he was a student at Valley Regional High School and has been following this discussion for some time. The hedge that's there is going either way. He liked the sidewalk on the south side. He further noted the old wall will fall down. It's not doing anything and not really retaining any dirt. He was concerned about the hedge being hit by passing semi-trucks. He stated he sees why the sidewalk on the other side of the road looks good but it doesn't feel quite right now. Most people drive to NQP and the Library.

Christopher Moore, Old Depot Road, stated he uses the sidewalks all the time. He liked the crosswalk where there is a stop sign. He noted visually grass will be limited. Mr. Kent noted grass strips are hard to maintain. Preserving the Chesterfield wall is more important than a grass strip. There is not enough space to put a grass strip. Mr. Moore noted maybe we do need a sidewalk on the north side but maybe not right now.

Sarah Jansen noted the trees are more important. The grass strip is a pain to take care of. One can't have everything.

Henry Krempel, 23 Prospect, noted he really appreciated seeing the renderings and getting an idea of the proposals. One proposal really opens it up, the other one not so much. He suggested perhaps there could be a tiny gravel path on the north side that wouldn't take out the trees.

Chairman Joplin noted the Committee has been talking about this project for 3 1/2 years. Some of the members have been talking to the State DOT for about 6 years when the initial investigation of this project began. He explained this is at least a 60 year plan. The sidewalk in front of Simon's is 80 years old. This type of project takes a lot of work and a lot of meetings. He further noted criticism is absolutely acceptable. That is how one pushes these projects forward.

Chairman Joplin read the following letters into the record -

1) A. Susan Peck, 101 Main Street, thanking Committee members for all their time and effort being committed to the Main Street Project and the betterment of the Town. She recognized that change can be disruptive but people cannot lose sight of the fact that Main Street is the gateway to Chester. Walkers, drivers, adults and children, the handicapped and those unsteady on their feet should be able to navigate in a way that is sensible and safe.

2) Diane Lindsay, 32 Winthrop Road, noted she has been walking that area for years. It has always been a dangerous place to walk and cross the street. She felt bad for the people in the house so close to the road but felt maybe the sidewalk could be slightly narrower. The Town can't lose sight of one of the purposes of this project – the time has come to make that section of road safer for pedestrians.

3) Cary Hull, 4 Spring Street, noted the Main Street Project Committee's proposal to add a sidewalk along the north side would eliminate a potentially dangerous situation. She also noted in light of the upcoming study of NQP to add a Library with community rooms and to improve the Park overall, that a sidewalk going directly to the Park would be very advantageous to town residents.

The Committee took a five minute recess before continuing with the meeting.

(b) area between Jacobson Engineering and the Post Office in terms of road layout and drainage

Chairman Joplin noted the issues were 1) width of road, 2) elevation of road, and 3) parking. If the road made a certain height to get proper drainage, are the properties lower than the road. Is there another solution to solving the drainage problem? Are we comfortable with a 70% solution? What's the trade off to get to 100%?

Gary Giroux noted they looked at the vertical profile issue. A meeting had been held with Ed Meehan, Michael Joplin, Steven Tiezzi, John Schroeder, Brian Kent and Gary Giroux to discuss the road alignment. Gary noted they talked mostly about graphics. Steven Tiezzi noted they reviewed the lower portion of the project as designed and concerns brought up by Ed Meehan, Al Bisacky and Jeff Jacobson.

Gary Giroux noted they designed the profile based on certain criteria which he reviewed. Jeff Jacobson, Town Engineer, verified everything they already knew and that there were issues there. It is very flat there and there is a drainage issue.

Gary Giroux noted the culvert controls the minimum that can be done. The culvert has to be replaced. It is a metal arch pipe that is rusting away. There is evidence of issues happening within the structure itself. They would replace the pipe with a concrete type structure. In this case it would be a pre-cast concrete box culvert 4' x 5'. He explained the top of the box has to be smooth transition from one side to the other. They could bring it down to 1/2 percent lowering the profile another foot. He reviewed the back fill around the pipe and the pipe's capacity. They could take the slope down to .5% and cut down to 1' of cover over the culvert.

Discussion ensued relative to the elevation of the road and the sidewalk. It was noted more catch basins would be needed. The area in front of Jacobson's office was reviewed. It was noted there is a large amount of grass there for the water to flow off the front yard and down to the brook.

First Selectman Meehan noted the biggest issue is changing the utility poles and the alignment of the road.

There was discussion regarding the number of parking spaces. There is no gain on the road, only in Laurel Hill Cemetery.

Chairman Joplin asked why the road had to be pushed so far over to Jacobson's side. Gary Giroux noted they are using standard engineering protocol for design. The culvert governs the elevation of the road. Chairman Joplin asked why the culvert couldn't be lowered. Giroux noted the downstream Creek is pretty flat. If there were to be dredging, the Army Corps would have to get involved. Brian Kent

noted they are raising the road 1/2 percentage pitch. Steven Tiezzi noted the properties on the north would benefit from this. Joplin asked what the finished elevation of the side walk and the grade 3' in was. Giroux noted they showed a fill line that stays within the Town's right-of-way. They can do a section for the driveways to see exactly what it would look like.

There was much discussion as to the elevation of the roadbed, the culvert, the crown of the road and number of catch basins. Giroux noted going to 1/2% grade saves a foot.

Chairman Joplin noted the Committee needs to make a decision either at this meeting or the next meeting and make recommendations to the Board of Selectmen at which point the Selectmen will either approve or critique it. Joplin asked First Selectman Meehan if he thought the plan to relocate the utility poles and realign the road would be supported by the Selectmen. First Selectman Meehan acknowledged that he knew more now than before and conceded the utility have to be moved. He noted parking must be saved and it must be safe. It was agreed the Committee should see the impact on the 3 or 4 properties on the north side.

There was discussion as to whether or not a vote should be taken at this meeting. John Schroeder noted to have a vote tonight would not sit well with Messrs. Lloyd and Bisacky.

**Motion by Mueller, second by Janecek, to hold a vote with the committee members present to vote on the matters at the School Lane area and the roadbed between the Post Office and Jacobson's Office. Voting in favor – Mueller, Janecek, Strauss, Tiezzi, Joplin. Opposed – Schroeder. Motion Carried.**

**Motion by Tiezzi, second by Strauss, that there be a continuous sidewalk on the north side of the street from Laurel Hill Cemetery to Route 154.** Brief discussion followed. Chuck Mueller noted he heard there was the potential of a new fence at 137 Main putting it on the property owners property. His read of the drawings puts it slightly closer to the house than the hedge is currently. He heard discussion pro and con of having the fence closer to the sidewalk to make no incursion on their property. Chairman Joplin noted one advantage is having a wider green strip and the other advance is it becomes their fence. First Selectman Meehan stated he didn't think things should be built in the Town right-of-way. Charlene Janecek noted the idea of moving the stairs for them was a good idea. Joplin agreed that was a good idea and they wouldn't be walking into the fence. Janecek noted the hedge is going no matter what. Brian Kent agreed the hedge will be removed. Meehan noted the hedge is a sight line issue. Mr. Gates (137 Main) asked if they could choose the fence. Mr. Kent replied yes. **Voting in favor – Tiezzi, Strauss, Janecek, Mueller, Joplin. Opposed – Schroeder.**

**Motion Carried.**

**Motion by Janecek, second by Mueller, to go with the recommendation of the Committee's engineer with regard to the road alignment etc. between the Post Office and Jacobson's Office as the engineer is the expert in these matters.** Discussion followed. Steven Tiezzi noted they will go with the 1/2% slope, talk to the property owners on the north side to see what the impacts are to those properties and look at the sections. **Voting in favor – Janecek, Mueller, Strauss, Tiezzi, Schroeder, Joplin. Opposed – none. Motion Carried.**

(c) review of DOT/TranSystems progress in design of Main Street Bridge in center of town  
There was a brief discussion regarding the curb reveal and what the DOT standard was. Steven Tiezzi asked if the State would allow a 4" reveal. Mr. Kent noted he recently did a project in Storrs and they allowed a 4" reveal. He also noted its actually safer especially for the elderly.

There was a brief discussion regarding the fact the plans the DOT had been moving forward with were not what the Town had sent to them. There was a discrepancy in the overall width of about 2 to 3 feet. The Town's plan was 2 to 3 feet wider. First Selectman Meehan wrote the DOT a letter last week asking them to restore the curb line as recommended by the Selectmen and Town Meeting. He is pressuring the State DOT to stay with what the Committee recommended.

There was brief discussion regarding getting a materials list to the DOT. First Selectman Meehan asked Brian Kent to submit additional services for doing the materials list. John Schroeder noted he looked at the list from the State DOT and didn't see much that shouldn't have been part of Phase 1 so requested the Selectmen not approve an addendum to the contract for additional services. First Selectman Meehan noted time is of the essence so it may happen without the Committee approving it.

Chairman Joplin noted during the 5 minute break before the DOT discussion he was handed a petition out in the hall with 39 signatures in opposition to the dual side walk.

4. Approval of Minutes – February 25, 2014 Regular Meeting Minutes  
**Motion by Strauss, second by Mueller, to approve February 25, 2014 Minutes as written. Voting in favor – Strauss, Mueller, Tiezzi, Schroeder, Janecek, Joplin. Opposed – none. Motion Carried.**

5. Approval of Bills – none.

6. Other Business of the Committee – none.

7. Next Meeting – March 25, 2014

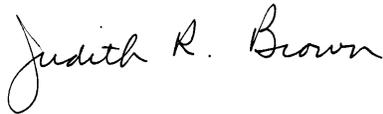
It was noted the few meetings were March 25th, April 8th and April 22nd.

8. Audience of Citizens – none.

9. Adjournment

**Motion by Tiezzi, second by Strauss, to adjourn at 10:00 PM. Voting in favor – Tiezzi, Strauss, Janecek, Schroeder, 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