

The Chester Main Street Project Committee held a Public Information Meeting on Wednesday, January 29, 2014, at the Chester Town Hall, 203 Middlesex Avenue, Chester, Connecticut. Approximately 50 citizens were in attendance.

Chairman Joplin noted the Committee has been working on a plan for the Village for several years. They worked on the Master Plan for the Village for 3 years with the Master Plan being approved last July. The Plan was then broken down into phases. Phase 1 being part of the larger Master Plan from the entrance of Laurel Hill Cemetery to Route 154. This phase is about 30% complete which doesn't sound like a lot but sets the stage and its important to get public comment.

Chairman Joplin noted it is important to remember this is not a Plan for 5, 10, 15 or 20 years. It is a Plan for the next 50, 60 or 70 years. The marks in front of Simons show the flood level from the Hurricane of 1938 so that sidewalk is 70 years old. This Town is going to live with this project for the next 75 to 100 years. This project is about what is right for the community.

Chairman Joplin introduced the Main Street Project Committee members – Charlene Janecek, Chuck Mueller, Steven Tiezzi, John King, Virgil Lloyd, John Schroeder. Brian Kent from Kent & Frost and Gary Giroux from Stadia Engineering were also present. Joplin noted everyone has worked very hard on this project.

Joplin indicated Brian Kent will give a presentation of Phase 1 from Laurel Hill Cemetery up Main Street to Route 154. He asked that all questions and comments be held until the end of the presentation. All suggestions, comments, questions, etc. are welcome and if there are any outstanding points that need further discussion or clarification, there will be another meeting next Wednesday, February 5th. The Committee's next meetings are scheduled for Tuesdays, February 11th and 25th. All Committee meetings are open to the public.

Brian Kent from Kent & Frost introduced himself and Gary Giroux from Stadia Engineering. He briefly reviewed DECD and DOT funding as well as other sources of funding which the First Selectman can explain later in the meeting.

Mr. Kent noted they looked at the following areas – Route 9 to the Village Center, Main Street out to Middlesex Avenue, North Main and Maple Street. In this process, they looked at tying it all together with wayfinding, granite curbing, crosswalks, street trees, etc. He further noted Chester's personality is not like any other town. It's quirky and naturally occurred over the years.

Mr. Kent next reviewed project phasing – Phase 1 was Main Street East, Phase 2 was West Main Street, Phase 2b was Water Street including the parking lot, Phase 3 was the Center and Phase 4 was Maple Street improvements including the parking lot and walkway. He noted the Main Street Bridge Replacement Project by the State is

now scheduled for 2016.

Mr. Kent then reviewed the estimated costs for all 4 phases. The total cost for all 4 phases was \$5,492,682. Phase 1 cost was \$1,371,754.

Mr. Kent reviewed existing conditions along with problems that need to be solved. Some of those problems included drainage; crosswalks, curbing and sidewalks; walls and pavements and trees. He reviewed the history of Main Street noting it was originally a State road given up in 1980. The road has been overlaid several times and has created drainage problems, pavement failures, etc.

Mr. Kent noted the trees in downtown have disappeared over the years. Trees will be replanted in downtown during Phase 3. Trees are also planned for this part of Main Street as well. He explained some trees have to be removed and have problems that you may not be able to recognize. The Norway Maples are falling apart and the Ash are diseased. A lot of the trees will be replaced with species adaptable to these conditions. Small ornamental trees will be used under the power lines. There will be a more rational canopy of street trees.

Mr. Kent reviewed drainage issues noting the culvert near Jacobson's office and the Post Office must be replaced. Traffic over the years has caused it to collapse. The channel by the stone walls is coming apart and will have to be repaired. Kent reviewed the drainage issue at North Quarter Park. He noted most of the upper part of Main Street and the Church Parking Lot funnels into this area. There is a large scoured area that is a very dangerous unsustainable condition.

Mr. Kent reviewed crosswalks, curbing and sidewalks. He noted sidewalks would be replaced with ADA compliant sidewalks. The standard is a minimum of 5 feet wide. As this project is receiving Federal and State funding, it must conform to standards. He indicated there are crosswalks in several locations that aren't received in a standard way. There is no safe place at the end of those crosswalks. All driveway aprons will be replaced with standard concrete sidewalk aprons.

Mr. Kent reviewed walls and pavements. He noted the bricks on the Chesterfield's wall are falling out on to the street on a regular basis. Crosswalks end directly into the wall and there is no safe refuge there. This is a real hazard. Walls overlap other walls. He reviewed the overlaying of Main Street and Middlesex Avenue. Catch basins are out in the lane in some cases. A granite curbing will be installed the entire length of Main Street on both sides.

Mr. Kent noted there are some beautiful landmark trees. Some new trees will also be planted. He noted there is a 36" diameter Ash that is dying and is a real hazard. The limb could fall into the road at any point. Kent indicated they evaluated the trees for health and hazard potential and have tried to preserve the best trees.

Mr. Kent reviewed the overall project area. The parking area at Laurel Hill Cemetery will be improved. He noted trees are referred to as visual friction that helps slow traffic down. Marked crosswalks also contribute to traffic calming. He noted there would be large trees on the north side and smaller ornamental trees on the south side so they won't ever reach the power lines.

Mr. Kent reviewed improvements to the Laurel Hill Cemetery parking area and the entrance to the Cemetery which included adding 4 parking spaces, lighting and correcting drainage issues. Mr. Kent explained the roadway would shift in some places in order to get the pitch for the water to drain properly. He reviewed shifting the road in more detail.

Mr. Kent reviewed the sidewalk, trees and walls along Main Street as it goes up the hill approaching School Lane. He noted the lower wall just behind the pavement could be rebuilt to allow the bigger Chesterfield's wall to remain. He noted the existing crosswalk at School Lane in front of Chesterfield's would be eliminated. A new sidewalk with handicap ramp would be put at the corner and run along the north side of Main Street. The 3 Sugar Maples would have to be removed and replaced with 4 good size canopy trees that will live for another 100 years and shade the street. The driveway at Chesterfield's parking lot will be improved. In some cases the driveways will be increased. He indicated the house at 137 Main is closer to the road than any other house. The hedge in this location is within the town right-of-way and will have to be removed. It obscures the view of anyone crossing from the parking lot. The sidewalk in this area will be right in back of the curbing. A fence or some type of screening will replace the hedge. Some flowering trees are also planned across the front of Chesterfield's. Canopy trees will be planted behind the sidewalk as it approaches North Quarter Park. Kent reviewed the trees to be removed and tree replacement. He reviewed the drainage pipe going 800 feet through North Quarter Park noting this is a dangerous situation. Water purification will be done to improve the flow and quality of water going into Chester Creek. Mr. Kent noted the sidewalk will be continued on the north side where there is no sidewalk now. He briefly reviewed a proposed path through North Quarter Park down to Laurel Hill Cemetery that is planned for some time in the future. This path would retrace the old trolley line. He explained wayfinding. He noted this area is not very attractive and is the Gateway to the Village. There would be a sign on the corner of Main and Middlesex Avenue pointing down the street to Chester Village. All signs would be standardized.

Mr. Kent noted that concluded the presentation and opened it up for public comment and discussion.

Steven Holmes, School Lane, thanked everyone for their efforts. He felt the revision to the plan solved a lot of problems. He liked the granite curbs, the addition of trees

for the long term and felt the general improvements to signage were great. He agreed the sidewalk was in dire need of repair. Mr. Holmes noted the School Lane intersection is a tough area. The 3 Maples on the east side are wonderful trees and he hated to see them removed. He further noted he didn't see any problems with these trees. He asked why the sidewalk couldn't be left on the southern side of the street and improved. He understood work has to be done on the retaining walls. Holmes stated the structure at 137 Main is so close to the road and putting a sidewalk there is not a great fit in his mind. He wasn't sure the trolley path really needed to be connected to the sidewalk. Holmes indicated he had a concern about too much lighting in Town. Any additional lighting must be full cut off. He was concerned about the energy it takes to run all these lights. He felt the lighting should be toned down especially in this section where it's residential.

Mr. Kent noted they really aren't doing much in the way of lighting. They are not adding any additional street lighting. He indicated the Energy Team has been looking at all street lights in Town. Mr. Kent noted in the center district they will be removing the cobra heads and replacing with period style fixtures that light the sidewalk and street and not radiate out into the neighborhood.

David Clough (sp ?), Goose Hill Road, asked what the specifications were for site lighting for the Laurel Hill Cemetery parking expansion. Mr. Kent noted these haven't been spec'd yet but it would be just enough lighting to be able to see where you going. These will not be conventional parking light standards.

Mr. Gates, 137 Main Street, voiced concern about removing the 3 trees. He was very sad these have to come down. He noted there has to be a way to preserve these trees. Steven Holmes noted these trees are the most colorful trees in Town.

Mr. Kent noted certain trees are a hazard, other trees are growing in a way that are threatening the power lines and some trees that are in decline will only get worse. He added the construction will interfere with the roots of these trees as some roots are actually under the street. There is a plan to replant at least 30 new trees. John Schroeder asked how many trees are planned for removal. Scot Mills, Tree Warden, reviewed the trees he felt should be removed. Mr. Gates noted this will clear cut the Gateway to the Village.

Chairman Joplin introduced Scot Mills, Tree Warden, noting the Committee asked him to evaluate these trees. Scot Mills noted he was not a member of this Committee. He has looked at the trees and felt to replace them now is a good thing. He indicated the center tree of the 3 Maples is declining. It is root grafting and when one is susceptible it spreads to the others. Mr. Gates asked if there were not methods to trim them before they decline. Mr. Mills explained root issues are very hard to control.

Steven Holmes noted the Town should try to keep those trees instead of spending money on a sidewalk.

Henry Krempel asked if its decided these trees are healthy would they interfere with that northern sidewalk. Mr. Kent replied trees and sidewalks can't co-exist.

David Clough asked if the Meads have been approached. First Selectman Meehan noted he met with the property owners and they understand the project goal to connect the sidewalk to North Quarter Park. New trees would be planted to provide for aesthetic enhancements, etc. The location of the trees was reviewed in relation to the Town right-of-way.

Mr. Kent reviewed the crosswalk and retaining wall in front of Chesterfield's and the 3 options available to either remove, rebuild or replace the wall.

There was discussion as to whether or not there should be a sidewalk on the north side of Main Street.

Andrea Ely noted she was a strong advocate for making the parking lot safe. There are more truck deliveries in Town than ever before. She noted as a merchant she was totally for drawing people into Town and having them feel safe about parking. People are now parking at the stop sign. She was in favor of whatever needs to be done with the lighting to make people feel safe and want to come into Town.

Nancy C. noted she was concerned with the sidewalk on the north side. She didn't think North Quarter Park has been used the way the Town would like it to be used. She didn't see many people using North Quarter Park.

The question was asked if it is the intent to continue the sidewalk on Route 154 down to Deep River. Mr. Kent noted the Master Plan does recommend that but it is outside the scope of this project.

Andrea Ely noted she loved the plan but felt the need to reconsider the residence so close to the road and the sidewalk on the north side of the street.

A resident noted when crossing the street from North Quarter Park a lot of cars whip around the corner from Route 154. Mr. Kent noted the trees in this area would be canopy trees and the branches are very high.

Mr. Kent also noted the funding for this project does not cover the North Quarter Park pathway trail. Chairman Joplin noted there is a corridor they are concentrating on. North Quarter Park is not being neglected. He explained the corridor was designed as the scope of work. The part with the pathway going down into the Park is probably two or three years in the future. The reason for continuing

the sidewalk on the north side of Main Street is to access North Quarter Park for future development.

Mrs. Gates, 137 Main Street, noted their property is greatly impacted by the sidewalk on the north side. She invited anyone to see the narrow space between the hedge and their front porch. She further noted as of yesterday, the trees are coming down, the driveway is coming out, the gardens are coming out and they are going to have to walk off their porch on to the 4 to 5 foot wide sidewalk. She didn't understand why that was needed as it causes so much distress to their property and other people in the neighborhood. She felt the sidewalk should stay where it is. Mrs. Gates indicated she was concerned with the value of their property.

There was more discussion regarding the hedge removal and privacy for 137 Main Street.

John Schroeder noted he was guessing the forefathers had this same debate as they chose to put the sidewalk on the south side.

Stu Fisher representing Chesterfield's and Brian Foley, noted he appreciated the elevation changes coming up Main Street and has walked the property many times. He noted the interior brick wall and sidewalk are an important piece of that property. He welcomed the sidewalk to stay but understood the significant elevation changes.

Jeanie Meade, 123 Main Street, noted they love the trees and have a beautiful Maple in their front yard. She asked the Committee take into consideration the plantings they have done in their front yard before more trees are added. Mr. Kent noted the Committee is taking into consideration the impact on adjacent properties. He indicated they are working with property owners in trying to accommodate their wishes. Gary Meade noted it would be overkill in the center of their yard. Mr. Kent noted they are looking at that.

Mr. Kent noted they are looking at 3" caliper trees. They have to balance cost against health of the trees, speed they grow, etc. Large trees with instant gratification will just sit and not grow much at all. Smaller trees are more adaptable and grow faster. The 3" tree will catch up to the 6" tree, overtake it and it will be a healthier tree that lives longer.

Henry Krempel noted there are two sidewalks across from each other. Is it possible to have the sidewalk on the north side narrower in front of 137 Main Street and the ADA 5 foot sidewalk on the south side. Mr. Kent noted they could look at that.

Van Stanke asked about the sidewalk on the south side in front of Chesterfield's. Mr. Kent noted they haven't studied that yet enough to know if it would be very

expensive. They also don't know the condition of the wall underneath. The wall is owned by the Town of Chester. Mr. Stanke noted there are some breakages in the wall itself. Mr. Kent noted one can see through the wall in a couple of places.

John Schroeder noted they haven't studied the cost difference between the sidewalk on the south side vs. the north side.

Cindy Lignar, 140 Main Street, noted they support further analysis of putting the sidewalk on the south side and felt a sidewalk on the north side wasn't necessary. She indicated she would love to see a sidewalk on Route 154 connecting to Deep River instead. She didn't see any value to the north side sidewalk. She supported the Gates. They support addressing the drainage issues, curbing and trees. Its just the one issue for them.

First Selectman Meehan noted he appreciates the work the Committee has done. This is a difficult issue both financially and with regard to safety. There is still the issue of the crosswalk at School Lane. There must be an ADA compliant landing at that corner in order to cross to the south side.

It was noted the crosswalk below School Lane is inherently terrible and there are sight line issues that would create an unsafe condition.

Steven Tiezzi noted there are a lot of things to consider in taking out trees. This has to be looked at for the next 60, 80 to 100 years. Knowing that if trees are planted now that would be much more improved and grow faster. The character of the Town must also be considered.

Steve Holmes noted he could appreciate the balance but the Town would be exposing one house closest to the road.

Mr. Gates noted from a safety perspective, he has seen 3 accidents as a result of people getting blinded by the sun. These trees provide blinding capabilities for people going west. By removing these trees it creates a higher probability of blinding accidents.

Chairman Joplin noted what he is hearing is that the owners on that part of the street feel those 3 trees are more valuable than the restored stone walls across the street. In order to have a 5 foot wide sidewalk in that area on one side of the street or the other either the trees have to be removed or the stone walls have to be removed on the opposite side. John Schroeder noted the Committee hasn't studied that yet.

Steve Holmes noted everyone here wants the sidewalk on the south side of the street and its the Committee's obligation to study that as an option.

First Selectman Meehan noted this is still early in the process. He indicated the privacy hedge is in the Town right-of-way, blocks the sight lines and is a hazard. He further noted the hedge, whether or not this project is done, may have to go. Its more than just the sidewalk there. The snowplows are right up against the hedges.

Mr. Gates noted he has met with Stu Fisher from Chesterfield's. He has cut out some of the trees for Chesterfield's employees. They have maintained the hedge. People love the hedge. Its an important piece of their property and also a safety issue for their children and pets if removed and if the sidewalk is right up against their house.

First Selectman Meehan noted, with all due respect to Mr. Fisher, Chesterfield's will not be the one to be sued. The hedge is a known safety hazard and sight line situation. John Schroeder noted during Mr. Meehan's first term they never heard of this safety issue. Meehan noted the Gates knew this was a hazard and that's why they trim the hedge. Mr. Kent noted there are safety issues all over. When it becomes public, that is when it becomes a liability to the Town.

Virginia Carmany noted discussion is centering around the ADA compliant sidewalks. Why can't the Town use their own funds. Mr. Kent noted if that was the case, then the project would not be done.

Virgil Lloyd noted as a Committee member and resident, he felt the Committee should study this some more.

Barbara Tomasi, 105 Main Street, asked if the rest of the sidewalks were ADA compliant. Mr. Kent noted they have to work with existing grades.

Susan Nygard, West Main Street, asked if the wall could come down, be graded and sidewalk put in. Mr. Kent noted removing the wall is one of the options.

A resident at 115 Main Street asked if there had been any consideration for speed bumps, restricting weight loads on trucks or making Main Street one way out of town and Water Street one way in to Town. Mr. Kent replied speed bumps are a discredited traffic calming measure. They hinder storm drainage and plowing. With regard to restricting weight limit, Mr. Kent replied he wasn't sure the Town can do that. First Selectman Meehan noted they may be able to control weight limit, but can't limit trucks. Mr. Kent noted one way streets are very problematic.

Jean Davies spoke as a resident living next to Laurel Hill Cemetery and the wife of a Committee member. She asked if the Town has looked into ConnDOT funding. First Selectman Meehan noted it is STEAP Grant money. The Town has not gone after any highway money with Federal or State attached to it.

Jean Davies noted she agreed with Andrea Ely. There are business employees parking at Laurel Hill Cemetery and it has to be made safer. She noted the Laurel Hill Cemetery concept was not part of the Master Plan approved in 2013. There was discussion about lighting but it hadn't been determined yet. She agreed lighting needs to go in, but it must be done carefully. This parking lot acts as overflow parking and she would hate to see the employees get displaced by making it a public parking area.

Discussion ensued with regard to the additional parking spaces and lighting at Laurel Hill Cemetery.

Henry Krempel referenced the question earlier about parking and asked if Phase 4 could be moved forward. Steven Tiezzi noted that was going to be the lay down area and that's why it is at the end. Chairman Joplin noted it would also be a lay down area for the Bridge Project in 2016.

Virginia Carmany questioned whether the sidewalk after North Quarter Park to Route 154 was really necessary. John Schroeder noted part of the rationale was to enable people from Old Depot Road to cross Middlesex Avenue. Mr. Kent noted children cross to Middlesex Avenue to get the school bus. Carmany noted it seems like a lot of expense for one family.

Andrea Ely noted perhaps the Committee could rethink this as there are a lot of people who don't want the north side sidewalk.

Mr. Kent noted the good trees will be retained. They would also be improving the picket fence area and giving those front yards a little more space.

A resident noted the plans in the selectmen's office were different than these. Mr. Kent noted they are moving quickly. They met with the Committee last night in order to get to 30% design and some changes were made at that meeting. They are trying to get to a point of more consensus than less consensus.

Chairman Joplin noted all comments will be taken back to the Committee and a decision will be made as to whether or not there will be another public presentation next Wednesday or whether it would be a Committee meeting.

Chairman Joplin noted an enormous amount of time has been spent discussing the area around Chesterfield's. He asked if there were any comments regarding the area from the Post Office down to Laurel Hill Cemetery that haven't already been made. He noted the concern is should there be a sidewalk on the north side or south side or both sides. This should be studied some more and cost determined. Is the Town willing to decide this on the basis of money or an overriding aesthetic issue. How

does one weight aesthetics against financial burden.

Erica Udoff asked if there were any other options for handling costs other than what is already being done. First Selectman Meehan noted the Board of Finance and Town Meeting have approved this as a Capital Project and the Town is putting \$75,000 aside each year. He reviewed what monies are remaining in the Capital Budget and what Grants have been approved or been applied for and waiting for a decision. He noted there must be priorities.

Chairman Joplin noted the reason a Master Plan is done is that it is required in order to qualify for the STEAP Grant. The Town will not get a STEAP Grant without a Master Plan.

Virgil Lloyd asked how the other phases will be financed. First Selectman Meehan noted the next phase would be after 2016 and the Bridge Replacement. The Town will continue to replenish Capital and hopefully there will be other grants at that time. Meehan reiterated this is a 10 year project. Perhaps the parking lots could be done from the local budget over a period of time.

Chairman Joplin thanked everyone for coming and their input. He noted there will be Committee meetings on February 11th and 25th and all meetings are open to the public. The Committee will meet immediately following this meeting to determine if there should be another public presentation or a Committee Meeting next Wednesday.

There being no further discussion or comments, the meeting adjourned at 9:35 PM.

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 typed name.

Judith R. Brown, Recording Secretary