

Chester Main Street Project Committee

Special Meeting, August 20, 2019

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1. Call to Order

The Chester Main Street Project Committee held a Special Meeting on Tuesday, August 20, 2019, 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

Members in attendance were Michael Joplin, Leslie Strauss, John Schroeder, Chuck Mueller and Charlene Janecek. Selectman James Grzybowski was also present.

3. Presentation by Jacobson office of plans at 70%

Chairman Joplin noted they are getting close to submission to the State. We have a \$2.3 million grant from LOTCIP, but it isn't official until plans are submitted, distributed to various agencies and everyone signs off. That process takes about 4 months, therefore, we pushed our schedule ahead to be able to submit plans in the fall. If everything falls into place, we can start around the middle of March at the earliest. We are now at the end of the design process.

Aaron Mortensen presented the plans and did a quick overview. The project starts at the reconstructed bridge moving east to the Cemetery, including a short distance up Spring and Maple Streets. Included will be new sidewalks, streetscape, site lights, landscaping, a plaza area. He reviewed areas of sidewalk and stairs to be redone in front of the French Hen and the Chester Wall. A timber guiderail will be installed along Spring Street down to the sidewalk. Curbing will remain granite with a 4" reveal. New storm drainage will be added. Parking stalls will be designated. Two crosswalks will be more decorative. We will also be adding some trees. Adding a sidewalk in front of 1 Maple where there is a depression in the road and the catch basin. It will also have a ramp to the crosswalk. The fire hydrant will be relocated to across from 1 Maple Street. Replacing the water main is scheduled for this fall and will provide water service to the new hydrant location. Site lights will be added same as what was installed in the State project. Mortensen explained connection of lights to the circuits. Receptacles will be added to the circle to provide lights for the flagpole and future holiday decorations.

Mortensen reviewed the area in front of the French Hen in detail. The step is being eliminated and concrete steps are being added to the wooden steps.

Mortensen reviewed the road grade to get the 4" reveal. The Belgium Block was reviewed.

Brian Kent noted the number one priority has been to create a uniform safe sidewalk environment for residents and visitors and to restore some trees. They also looked into lighting similar to what was there. Bollards will be installed so vehicles can't pull into the new pedestrian plaza in front of the brewery. The bollards can also be removed for larger events and snow events. Kent noted there had been a lot of discussion over the years about the area over the wall. There will be a row of evergreens and low maintenance perennial in front of it. Hopefully

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either a garden club or merchants will be able to maintain this area. Kent reviewed the area around the flagpole replacing all the plants.

Brian Kent reviewed site furnishings (trash receptacles, bike racks) and wayfinding signage directing people to the parking lots (Maple Street and Water Street lots). He located those two parking lots on Google Maps to facilitate finding them. He noted there are also a couple of benches along the road.

Steve Holmes, 7 School Lane, asked if this was Option B. Kent noted at the last meeting there was a debate as to whether the Chester Wall triangle parking spaces would be paved in asphalt or paved in the same material as the pedestrian area which a combination of concrete and stone. The debate went through the Committee and to the Board of Selectmen who voted to go with this option which had the parking spaces delineated with asphalt, and that was Option B. Holmes also inquired about striping. Kent noted there is plenty of room for parking as the spaces had been tweaked.

Erica Udolf, 122 Main Street, asked if the street is going to be 4" lower, is the part of Main Street already done 4" lower? Mortensen noted there is a transition. Schroeder noted there had been some discussion about going to 5". Mortensen noted it was brought up in May and 4" was decided at that time. Bill DeJonge asked about the bollards and if they would collapse if hit by a vehicle. Kent noted the vehicle would be damaged and not the bollards.

Brian Kent noted in Option B, the pattern of sidewalk alternating concrete and Belgium Block continue through yes. The Trolley Track is also included. Kent noted the Information Kiosk is being simplified and scaled down.

Priscilla Robinson asked about lighting. The lights installed on the bridge are what is being used. All the lights on private property will be connected to the street light circuit. If the lights are too bright, they can be toned down.

Virginia Carmany noted she heard the State wasn't going up Maple and Spring Street. Mortensen noted the State never got back to us how far up they would go. The plans are being submitted and the State. There will probably be a back and forth as to how far the State will go and then an agreement. This won't delay the project at all. The road matches grade. There will probably be an answer from the State in October. It was noted this will not make the project any longer.

Rob Bibbiani, 82 Middlesex Avenue, asked if there was any further consideration for slowing down the speed. He also noted some municipalities are painting the pavement, maybe grey, to reflect the sunlight and asked if and consideration has been given for that. Mortensen noted they have not looked into the different color pavement. He also noted the crosswalks are more predominant and there will be new signage so hopefully that will slow down the traffic.

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Steve Holmes asked if there was any description regarding street furnishings (bicycles, trash cans, street benches), etc. Mr. Kent noted these will match what is already there from the previous phase. Retro-fitting street lights was also discussed.

4. Reviewing calendar in terms of scheduling the project itself

5. Reviewing ideas on how job site can be managed

Mr. Mortensen noted a few things have to happen before starting construction. Spring is the most logical time to start. Submission will be made to RiverCog on September 15th which then submits to the State for their review. Once the State reviews it, the drawings will be revised. Bid process will start in mid-December. Looking to get bids back 3rd week in January. The bids will go to the State for review and this will take anywhere from a week to a month. Once approved, the contractor will be on board. The Notice to Proceed and Notice of Award will be done and construction can start mid-March. Mr. Mortensen noted the Town must obtain easements and temporary rights for the sidewalks. The Town Attorney is looking into the light situation as some lights are on private property. There needs to be a drainage easement between Otto's and the law firm. Mortensen also noted in front of Simon's, River Tavern and Dina Varano's there is an existing stone wall underneath the pavement that extends out from the building facade for varying distances. That situation needs to be fixed before the contractor comes in and digs it out. The Town is working with the property owner to take care of that and filling these voids up and bringing it up to grade so when the contractor comes in and digs it will be solid ground. That is one factor that must be addressed before construction starts.

Mr. Mortensen noted the duration hasn't been determined yet. It will be determined when the cost estimate is done after finalizing the design. One factor with the time line is how the project is phased out. We understand the merchants concerns and will work with the contractor to find a balance for the merchants and construction. If the contractor has free range to just go through and do the project, it would probably be 3 months.

Someone in the audience asked if all the merchants would be able to stay open without any problem. Chairman Joplin noted this can be approached in two ways. One is to get in there, get it all done and get out. The other approach is to enable merchants to stay open maybe 75 to 80% of the time and allow some parking, but it will extend the time of the project. When the sidewalk in front of a merchant's door is replaced, that merchant will not be able to open that day. It could also be 2 or 3 days. Joplin noted this project will disrupt merchants. One reason to push this project ahead is because we need to select a contractor. One question to a contractor is how much will you cooperate with the merchants. Mr. Schroeder noted that can also be put in the bid specifications. One of the merchants noted if this is going to go full steam ahead to get it done, there will have to be some sort of relief for rent, etc. If the merchants are going to be out of business for a period of time, they will need help. Joplin noted the Committee will have to choose an approach and make sure the chosen contractor is on board.

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Mr. Mortensen noted the goal is to have the contractor that did the bridge review the plans and get some feedback on accommodating merchants, etc. during construction time. Mortensen noted he would clarify that the bridge contractor could also bid on the project even if the plans had been sent to them for feedback prior to the bid being sent out. The Town certainly would not want to do anything to prohibit them from bidding on the project. It was suggested if they didn't want to give feedback they could suggest someone else to do so.

Mr. Mortensen reviewed phasing of the project. Construction will start at Maple and Main (storm drainage). There will be a one lane traffic pattern along Main Street. Storm drainage, electrical conduit, granite curbing can all be done at the same time. Once that is done, lanes switch for the next phase on the other side. Work will then be done in the plaza area. Mortensen suggested a delineated area in the plaza area should be for delivery trucks. In response to a question from Virginia Carmany, parking was reviewed. Traffic pattern was reviewed as well. Mortensen reviewed the final paving process, which could be done one lane at a time.

Mr. Mortensen noted every effort made to keep all the merchants open will extend the cost and time of the project. There needs to be a balance between keeping the merchants open and getting the project done as soon as possible.

A member of the audience noted the merchants need to know as much information about the project and timing as possible in order to place their merchandise orders. Charlene Janecek noted First Selectman Gister sent out a questionnaire to the merchants with various detailed questions relating to their businesses. Some questionnaires came back, and some didn't. She noted they are compiling the data received from these questionnaires to see what the busiest days are, etc. Janecek noted the weather has a lot to do with construction as well, if there is a cold winter, the project can't start. Chairman Joplin noted a lot of things can be negotiated with the contractor. The merchants need to communicate with the Committee in order for it to negotiate with the contractor. Chuck Mueller suggested rather than inviting the merchants to the next meeting, Chairman Joplin should go to the next merchants meeting. A member of the audience asked if there has been any communication with the landlords in town to let them know what their tenants are facing with regard to rent payments.

Bettie Perreault asked if the water main project has been cleared and will be completed in time. Chairman Joplin noted a letter has been received noting the water main work is scheduled between October 15 and November 15.

The record should show that Selectman Grzybowski, Ed Meehan and Charlene Janecek are back.

John Schroeder asked what building owners had been contacted. Chairman Joplin noted Carol Lewitt has been contacted regarding the voids of 4 store fronts. She wants to do this work as soon as possible. Aaron Mortensen noted the structural engineer is GNCB. It was noted this is

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private property so the owner can have whoever they want do the work. Schroeder asked what happens if foundation issues are exposed at this time. Who deals with that? Mortensen reviewed what work was included in the contract. It was also noted if the building owner has to get someone in to do a structural repair, there could be a delay. Grzybowski noted if the sill is rotted and needs to be replaced, it's on the building owner to replace both the sill and sidewalk. The project will not be delayed because of a building owner. The building owners have been warned about potential damage to their buildings and what is the owner's responsibility. Ed Meehan noted this should be spelled out in the temporary construction easements on private property. These easements should be done before going out to bid. John Schroeder noted the question was is the town funding this or not and what would be the potential delay.

Chuck Mueller asked when did this meeting tonight become public presentation. We were supposed to get the drawings and review them as a Committee. He was completely surprised there was a room full of people. Selectman Grzybowski noted this was not posted as a public presentation and the agenda should have been followed. Mueller noted this should have been discussed as a Committee before going before the public and a room full of people. There needs to be better communication. Mueller also asked where were the drawings a week before the meeting.

Brian Kent noted he has been speaking to Peter Good about wayfinding signage. They also talked about reducing the size of the Kiosk. It was noted visitors often find things more on their phones than thru signage. John Schroeder noted he wants to know how many signs there are, what they are and what their function is. Brian noted he will be meeting with Peter Good to design the kiosk. Selectman Grzybowski asked when could the 100% drawings be seen. John Schroeder noted he would like to see the 90% construction documents now. Brian Kent noted the 70% drawings are done now. Chuck asked Aaron to send out a .pdf document to all the members.

Leslie Strauss noted she would have liked to know some of this information before the public.

John Schroeder reviewed lighting and some work being done in the Maple Street Parking Lot. It was noted the ETeam is researching lighting throughout town.

Aaron will print a set of .pdf's to be in the Selectmen's Office for public review.

John Schroeder asked about the stair detail through the stone wall and if it was going to be widened. Aaron reviewed the stair detail noting there is a 4' clearance between the face of the rails, granite stairs on a concrete slab and the top granite.

Leslie Strauss asked if the parking in front of Simon's would be striped. Grzybowski noted a lot of the merchants want individual striping rather than straight line. Motorcycle parking is not being eliminated.

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There was discussion regarding the work being done at the Maple Street Parking Lot and when this would be done. The work also includes the path down to Main Street including lighting.

John Schroeder asked why the project couldn't start in January. Chairman Joplin noted he discussed this with Jeff Jacobson who indicated he could not be done because of the weather. Schroeder noted it would have been most helpful to the merchants if construction could have started in January/February. Chairman Joplin reviewed his discussion with Jeff Jacobson regarding an earlier start time.

Leslie Strauss asked if we could ask the Town Attorney about contacting the bridge contractor for some feedback on the plans. It was agreed this should be confirmed with the Town Attorney.

There was much discussion about submissions to BOS, RiverCOG and then CONNDOT and the fact we should keep this moving along during the process.

6. Brian Kent to produce set of prints of the area

7. Method or means to help commercial tenants during construction

Chairman Joplin noted this has to be a discussion with the merchants. Charlene Janecek noted First Selectman Gister has been meeting with the merchants. She noted the merchants want to know the timeline, when is it starting, how long will it last and how will it affect the merchants. Chairman Joplin noted he has brought this up to the Board of Finance as to any help that can be provided.

Charlene Janecek noted First Selectman Gister has put together a small committee on how to keep bringing people into town during the construction.

8. Other Business, if any

9. Bills for Payment – none.

10. Approval of Minutes – July 30, 2019

Motion by Janecek, second by Mueller, to approve July 30, 2019 Minutes as amended by John Schroeder. Unanimously Approved.

11. Audience of Citizens – none.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, August 27, 2019. Chuck Mueller noted the Committee should review the .pdf's next week and come out of that meeting with a clear understanding of the phasing of the project. There was discussion regarding obtaining the temporary construction

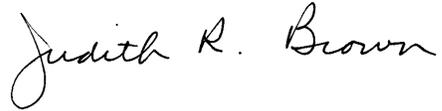
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easements before submission to the State. First Selectman Gister has been working on the easements.

12. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:31 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 text "Respectfully submitted,".

Judith R. Brown, Recording Secretary