

Minutes

Downtown Plan Implementation Committee

October 1, 2015

Town Hall Room 309 -9:00 AM

Note: These are “action minutes” of the meeting as previously agreed to by the DPIC. The entire meeting was recorded and can be viewed on the Town’s website.

DPIC Attendance: Dewey Loselle (Co-chairperson), Melissa Kane (Co-chairperson), Larry Bradley, Matthew Mandell, Steve Desloge, Gary Conrad, Steve Edwards, Ken Bernard, Lois Schine, Dale Call, Alicia Mozian, Mary Young

DPIC Unavailable: Jessica Newshel, Peter Boyd, Anthony Riggio, Craig Schiavone, Peter Ratkiewich, Jennifer Fava, and Stephen Smith

First Selectman Jim Marpe kicked-off the meeting and stressed the importance of the implementation phase of the downtown planning process. After his remarks, the committee members introduced themselves and shared any prior involvement in the downtown planning process.

Dewey circulated and reviewed the charge of the committee as defined by the Selectman’s office.

Melissa gave a brief overview of the master plan and reminded the committee that the plan is a dynamic tool. The implementation chart and funding source tables were discussed in more detail. The town’s 5-year capital forecast was circulated as well for reference and context.

Melissa reviewed what has been identified as initial priority projects. These would have immediate impact on how people can use Downtown. The first being Main Street Improvement, which is well underway - funded by a grant plus 100% participation from merchants. Expected completion by end of the month. Town applied for a STEAP grant to continue the sidewalk treatment on the Parker Harding side of the stores. DPIC is following up. DMA had a meeting about holiday decorations to try to create a standard going forward. Main Street is a starting point for improvements in downtown.

The second priority is the maintenance of downtown. Currently, there are many different bodies responsible for maintenance. Dewey said that there is currently a study underway on who maintains what, how often, how much it costs, etc. The study will hopefully give the town a report that lays out how maintenance currently works and what can be done to improve the situation. There seems to be a desire to have one entity responsible for downtown maintenance - this possibility should be revisited.

The third priority is to combine and co-manage of the Avery and Baldwin lots. Traffic on Elm Street will likely become congested with the development of Bedford Square and this could help traffic flow as well as add some additional spaces.

Steve Edwards discussed what's happening with Elm Street improvements. Burying power lines will be the most expensive part of the project. There was an idea to make a portion of Elm Street one way from Main Street. Dale commented that it is an option worth considering, especially if the Avery and Baldwin lots can be merged. This could have positive effects on traffic, parking, and pedestrian safety.

Post Road crossing improvements is another priority for the committee. The Town needs to coordinate with State DOT to make any changes. Crosswalk and traffic light proposal - what are the next steps to get these items on the DOT request list? It was noted that a crosswalk without a traffic light is not looked upon favorably by the state.

At the next meeting, Alicia will discuss coordinating flood prevention measures with upstream towns. Melissa is working with several arts and cultural organizations who are excited about getting involved in making part of downtown a cultural hub.

Ken reminded the committee about the non-profit organization set up by Downtown 2020 that can be used to help raise private funds for specific projects.

Melissa said that it would be helpful for the committee to create working groups with members' interests and skills in mind. Members should think about what project or area they would like to focus on. Steve Desloge would like to be involved with downtown maintenance and Alicia with water issues. RBA will continue to maintain the website so that it can be used to update the public on our progress.

Future meetings will be recorded and viewable on the town's website. The next meeting will be held on November 5 at 9am. Members will be polled again to ensure a time that works best for most. An occasional evening meeting, in order to encourage more public participation, will be considered as well.

Meeting adjourned 11:00am.

Recorded by Jessica Newshel
Downtown Planning Implementation Committee