



**TOWN OF CHELMSFORD
VINAL SQUARE STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN
COMMITTEE**

Approved 3/9/2021

MEETING MINUTES

February 8, 2021

7:00 P.M. CALL TO ORDER VIA ZOOM

Members Present: Joe Tierney, William Gilet, Jr., Mike Walsh, Janet Murphy, Laura Lee, Brian Creamer

Others Present: Evan Belansky, Community Development Director
Paul Cohen, Town Manager
Steve Callaghan, Parks & Playgrounds Coordinator
Virginia Timmins, Select Board

Mr. Tierney called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He thanked the committee for continuing its efforts during his recent illness.

Recent Updates

The Planning Board approved a subdivision to be located at 314 Dunstable Road.

A new entity has shown interest in purchasing the UMass West property on Princeton Street. A multi-family project is being explored for presentation to the Select Board. Ms. Murphy reported seeing two new hair salons in the Square. The dog kennel is expected to move into 40 Vinal Square soon.

Mr. Cohen reported that modular additions will be installed at the North Fire Station in March as renovations to the building get underway. There will be no impact to the neighborhood. He also stated that improvements to the treatment plant at Southwell are in the early stages.

A previously approved solar farm behind the existing mill in Southwell Field is not advancing at this time, per Mr. Belansky.

The hardware store is reportedly going to reopen as a hardware store, according to some social media information. There appears to be activity taking place there.

The wayfinding program has been on hold. Wayfinding signs on Tyngsboro Road, Princeton Street or in Vinal Square itself, will need Dept. of Transportation approval. Signs placed away from the Square would be easier to locate. We will need assistance from DPW as to fabricating costs.

Conceptual Improvements

We are in need of a recommendation from the Tree Committee as to a species of tree to plant in 30-inch containers. Mr. Creamer and Mr. Walsh have been working with Steve Jahnle of DPW on this, and will have information to report at the next meeting. We would like to know how much time is needed to place an order and receive delivery of planters.

Mr. Belansky stated he had received communications on a North Village survey. One is from Howard Stein Hudson in the amount of \$16,900. NMCOG submitted a similar proposal, at no cost to the Town. If paying for this work, the money would come from the Traffic Mitigation Account which is under the discretion of the Planning Board, and a vote from them is required to release the funds. NMCOG is well versed in providing such services to its member communities, and assisted the committee some years ago in a public input session held at the senior center. Mr. Belansky felt either organization was qualified to perform the assessment, but noted that not tapping into PB funding would free the funds for other projects, should they arise. It was noted that NMCOG does not provide engineering services, such as would fall under the scope of HSH to perform, but is not included in the HSH proposal as outlined above.

After discussion, the consensus was to use the services of NMCOG. HSH would be able to bid on the final design, once decided upon. NMCOG should be asked to attend a future meeting and to discuss methods for public engagement, and to define what they see as the scope of the project.

Varney Park and Southwell Field

Mr. Callaghan of DPW reported that he attended the January 21 CPC meeting to request funding for improvements to Varney Park and Southwell Field. Both were approved; \$285,000 for Varney, and \$45,000 for Southwell. The next step is for Town Meeting approval. Work can begin in Fall 2021 if Town Meeting authorizes the funding.

Committee Priorities

The Priority Feedback Document was reviewed. It was felt the document was up to date with members' priorities clearly stated. The document will be reviewed again at the next meeting in terms of ratings for each item, and hopefully will then be ready to submit to the Select Board.

Planning Board Matters

Mr. Belansky familiarized the committee with several Spring Town Meeting warrant articles pertaining to zoning, which could impact the North Village. These have been put forth by the Planning Board.

E-commerce: businesses that use on-line ordering only, for pick up or delivery.

Fulfillment center: businesses using dedicated space for order fulfillment, resembling Amazon. He noted that such facilities currently exist in Chelmsford.

Ghost kitchen: a commercial kitchen, with no dining on the premises, 3rd party delivery, providing take out service only.

Dark store: retail establishment that is not open to the public, but offers fulfillment services.

Marijuana: would permit medical marijuana dispensaries, cultivation, and accessory uses to support retail sales, such as processing and packaging. Retail marijuana establishments are currently prohibited.

The warrant articles propose allowing such activities in certain zoning districts in both the Center Village and the North Village. The objective of the proposed zoning changes is to provide support for a number of operations that have suffered greatly during the Covid 19 pandemic, many of whom have had to alter their entire business strategy and/or operations, and allow them to continue to operate in this manner in order to remain in business and serve the community.

With regard to fulfillment centers, Mr. Belansky stated that nearby towns, such as Littleton and Tewksbury, currently have zoning in place to allow them. E-commerce is viewed as a vital component in the community, and current market conditions emphasize the need to support it. The Board of Health voiced no objections to the proposed marijuana article. The article would allow the Town to further regulate those marijuana-related operations identified in the article. All would need a license from the Select Board.

There was considerable discussion about the zoning districts in Center and North and the appropriateness of locating certain types of business under the proposed new zoning districts, given the disparities in the two areas of town. There are Industrial, CB, and shopping center zoning designations within the North Village and Vinal Square. Questions arose as to which district would be appropriate to locate any of the types of business included in the article. Concern was expressed as to making sure Center Village and North Village, especially for e-commerce and marijuana operations. There was consensus that the two villages should be consistent in terms of zoning districts for location of e-commerce and marijuana.

Mr. Gilet made a motion to recommend to the Planning Board that North Village be treated consistently with Center Village, in terms of zoning designations, for purposes of e-commerce and marijuana operations. Ms. Lee seconded. Unanimous.

Other

Mr. Gilet called attention to the fact that there is one vacancy in Precinct 2 for Town Meeting Representative. Precinct 3 has no vacancy. The election is Tuesday, April 6, 2021.

Mr. Creamer made a motion to approve the draft meeting minutes for January 12, 2021 as submitted, seconded by Mr. Gilet. Unanimous.

There being no further business, Mr. Walsh moved to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Murphy. Unanimous. The next meeting will take place Tuesday, March 9, at 7 p.m. via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Murphy