

Town of Chelmsford
Center Village Master Plan Implementation Committee
50 Billerica Rd., Chelmsford, Ma 01824
Zoom Meeting
MINUTES
April 8, 2021

Attending: Janet Askenburg (vice-chair), Eileen DeChaves, Jack Handley, Brian Milisci, Michael Rigney (chair), Nancy Araway

Not Present:

Others Present: Evan Belansky (Community Development Director), Lisa Marrone (Director of Business Development)

Please note that all documents referenced in these minutes are on file at the Town Manager's Office, 50 Billerica Rd., Chelmsford, Mass. This meeting was hand recorded by the chair.

This meeting was called to order at 6:04PM by the chair.

1. Existing Projects Updates

a. Traffic advisory committee

L. Marrone spoke with members of the Traffic Advisory Committee who were preparing a presentation for this committee.

M. Rigney asked if the presentation was for this committee or the Select Board as well? He thought it would be faster to do one and not wait for feedback from the CVMPC before bringing the matter to the Select Board. E. DeChaves concurred.

L. Marrone explained there was not a defined path forward, that she would forward comments to the TAC. J. Handley expressed a desire for input from this committee. M. Rigney asked who ultimately owns the document? The Select Board? E. Belansky confirmed that proposing regulatory changes would be the purview of the Select Board. There was another question about whether the scope of the current work was town-wide or restricted to the Center. L. Marrone said she would look into the current scope of work.

b. 1 Billerica Rd

E. Belansky told the committee the owners are bringing forward a new proposal in May, first step is subdivision of the property. Americal submitted an administrative request to the Planning Board for the Oddfellows portion of the property, requesting reconsideration of the denial, under the theory that considering the Oddfellows as a standalone project with subdivision of land would be a major revision and thus eligible for reconsideration. At this point it is not clear if it continues to include residential apartments. The first step would be a request for determination of the applicabilty for re-opening the hearing.

J. Askenburg asked if there was any discussion about the back parking lot? E. Belansky replied that it appears as though restaurant will have dedicated parking on same lot as restaurant. At this time it appears that they are seeking to continue the previous 50% reduction by right.

J. Askenburg asked if there had been any discussion about town being able to continue the prior lease? Have they approached the town? E. Belansky replied that after the denial by the Planning Board the Town asked Americal about buying the lot, but that the owner was not interested in selling the land to the Town at this point. He pointed out that the owners' representative has a fiduciary responsibility, and that they are taking it one step at a time. The restauranteurs are interested in continuing to advance so the logical thing is to pursue that. He further stated the property owners clearly know their options, that if they want to talk about municipal leases there is interest, they are aware but it does not appear to be their next step.

There was further discussion about the reconsideration. E. Belansky explained there is a provision in state zoning act for reopening, but it is not often used. An example would be a zoning article denied at TM cannot return for 2 years but if it is brought forward in a significantly different form during those 2 years it can readvance. There is not a clear definition of "significantly different".

J. Handley reported that the Historic District Commission had also been advised of the intent to return, and had inquired about the upkeep of the Fiske House.

c. Brookwalk - review

E. Belansky reviewed prior work - an article requesting CPC funding was brought forward to Town Meeting 3 years ago, but failed. The Land Trust had not been supportive of that article, but they did return to the CVMPC meeting before COVID struck and offered to do a site walk He suggested a good first step would be to take them up on their ofer, begin building support. He believes that would be a process for the North (western) section of the trail, connecting from the bike path to Land Trust land. If the initial work progresses, then go back to CPC and TM for funding - Fall Town Meeting would be the earliest opportunity.

He also suggested the CVMPC revisit John Harrington's offer to extend and upgrade the existing boardwalk.

N. Araway asked about the overall vision of the boardwalk. B. Milisci explained it was about connectivity: connect to 27, to Summer St, and through the Center - three distinct pieces of forest, wetland, and pavement.

d. Other updates

The committee returned to a discussion of parking in the Center Village, noting that under the new proposed zoning bylaw, a 100 seat restaurant plus 8 1 bedroom apts would need 54 parking spaces under new 20% reduction allowance. M. Rigney suggested the committee should have a longer discussion about pricing and desire for parking. J. Askenburg asked if a vote were necessary, M. Rigney wanted a discussion first. J. Handley suggested that the committee should surface the issue, and a vote might not be a bad idea. N. Araway reminded the committee that we haven't seen the final plan yet, might wait to review then. She thought the owners would ultimately try to build out the remainder of the lot. There was discussion that recommending purchase of the remaining lot might not be practical, but recommending that town acquire space to provide parking could be appropriate. E. DeChaves agreed she thought the owners would want to develop parking lot. Also agreed the committee should take a bigger role, asking what does that look like? One business has left, but hopefully another comes in and we need to prepare for that. Another sign is that the bike trail has opened up again, we may be coming out of a period of relatively lax demand - how will that affect the need for more parking. The question is how do we want to take a role in what comes next? B. Milisci suggested the committee emphasize connectivity and parking, as it has been doing from the beginning but was uncomfortable picking a price to pay.

E. DeChaves updated the committee on road work, saying they are still waiting for DPW update on the next phase at Cushing Place. The understanding is the order will be Verizon, then National Grid, then road widening. There was a discussion 3-4 weeks ago with the contractor about who will pay, but nothing has been heard since. E. Belansky reminded the committee the work has to be done by end of June or state grant will go away. \$290k of \$370k has already been submitted.

L. Marrone reported that funding is available in collaboration with bordering towns to be directed to small business. Also that the age-friendly pocket park is looking for sponsors. There are already plans to plant a perennial garden in one phase, and they have applied for an AARP community challenge grant. She recently met with a retail visioning specialist about using funds to do webinar or even in-person visits to storefront retail. Finally, online ribbon cuttings with CTM are planned, done as a combined zoom-live link.

2. Public Input

No one came forth at this time.

3. New Business - future agenda items and to-do summary

No new items were brought forth by Committee members.

MR to re-engage John, Sue, Phil on boardwalk issues.

MR/JA to work on review of parking highlights in original Master Plan.

Minutes Approval

Motion: by B. Milisci to approve the Meeting Minutes of February 11, as amended. Seconded by J. Handley. **Motion carries.**

Next Meeting Date

The next meeting is scheduled for May 13 at 6pm

Adjournment

Motion: by J. Askenburg to adjourn the meeting at 7:11PM. Seconded by B. Milisci. **Motion carries.**