

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
DOWNTOWN MANCHESTER SPECIAL SERVICES DISTRICT**

June 21, 2023

8 AM

Meeting held at Work_Space, 903 Main Street

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sophia Dzialo, Chair
Daniel Mulligan, Vice-Chair
Nicholas DuBaldo, Secretary
Tarek Ambia, Finance Chair
Ryan Fagan

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT:
Gary Anderson, Director Planning and Development

ALSO PRESENT:
Lynn Sottile, Stacey Zackin, Esther Jeffery, Brittany Keune, Jay Roberts, Robert Sulick,
Emma Peterson, Beth Ringo

STAFF PRESENT: Bernie LeBel, Downtown Manager

MEMBERS ABSENT: Joseph Lipiner

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS
ABSENT: None

Call to Order:

- Ms. Dzialo calls the meeting to order at 8:00 AM

Roll Call:

- Ms. Dzialo noted those present and absent. All in attendance introduce themselves.

Minutes:

- A motion to approve the minutes of May 10, 2023 is made by Mr. Fagan, seconded by Mr. Mulligan. All approve.

Downtown Manchester Streetscape Project:

- Mr. Anderson presents the working draft of the Downtown Manchester Streetscape Project – Mr. Anderson notes that this project is a long time coming and that they are starting to get funding for this plan. He would like to talk about what the plan is and is not; there is nothing set in stone yet. His department is still in the planning stage but have based this presentation on conceptual feedback from previous surveys. "Downtown for All" is the driving theme of this

concept. His department is following the "Complete Streets" policy adopted by the Town in 2016 to make the streets accessible to everyone no matter their means of transportation. Past initiatives from the 2021 Downtown Improvement Survey, Downtown 2020, 2017 Strategic Planning Workshop, 2013 Open Call for Downtown Ideas, Manchester 2020 Plan of Conservation and Development, Manchester NEXT comprise many of the features of this project. Some of the themes from the surveys are to make Main Street more walkable, increase patio/front street sizing, outdoor cafes, benches, pedestrian areas, making Downtown more friendly for everyone. Market lights and murals, temporary outdoor dining, closing Purnell Place to vehicular traffic Thursday through Sunday. In 2021 the Planning Department asked the community what they thought about the improvements made so far; the vast majority either loved or liked the improvements. Mr. Roberts inquires how many people were surveyed. Mr. Anderson believes they received around 200 responses.

- Key features of the proposal- Mr. Anderson reports that the proposal has coordinated traffic signals, four travel lanes reduced to two with a center turn lane, a cycle track for the length of Downtown, wider sidewalks and more public space, additional outdoor dining and outdoor retail spaces, slower vehicle speeds and safer pedestrian crossings, roundabouts at the northern and southern entrances to Downtown, potential public art installations, new and appropriate street trees with additional landscaping. The traffic engineers believe that traffic will not be impeded by using the turn lane in addition to the single lane of through traffic but instead will allow traffic to flow at a slower, safer speed.
- Concepts – Mr. Anderson highlights some of the proposal's concepts: At the north end of Main Street, the first proposed roundabout with slip lanes and additional green space at the Weiss Building. The cycle track would run from the west side and run all the way down the street; it would be raised on the curb to provide another layer of protection for the cyclists. Ms. Ringo asks if some of the street trees proposed would be replacing existing parking places. Mr. Anderson replies that they may, but the number of on-street spaces will not change and there will be an increase in the availability of off-street parking spaces. At the proposed new library area, there is a plan to redevelop that area which will require off-street parking as part of that plan. Mr. Roberts asks if that lot will be a paid lot, Mr. Anderson believes that there wouldn't be a change to the parking fees unless the District makes that change. Mr. Anderson notes that his department has been working carefully with the Manchester Road Race Committee to ensure there will be a safe race with a street setup that can accommodate their needs. He notes that at certain times of day, center off-loading could be possible for deliveries (in areas where there is no turning). Conceptually, he notes, there are parallel spaces and diagonal spaces down the street but it will depend on where you are on the street; where the roadway is narrow, the parking is parallel; where wider, the diagonal will be in place. Ms. Ringo comments that her business and customers are already being impacted with Purnell Place being closed for four days a week and they are not able to load and unload product to or from the business. She feels that with parallel parking on her block, she and her customers couldn't load and unload furniture. Mr. Anderson says that each type of business has different needs and his department is trying to balance out the unique needs of the various types of businesses here. Mr. Roberts believes it impacts all the businesses and feels that it seems to favor restaurants to block of

parking specifically for them which puts all other businesses at a disadvantage for parking and he doesn't feel that those things are equitable; he would like to make sure there is enough parking for everyone regardless of their business type. Ms. Keune mentions that in her business when they only have a few people working the store, those employees are sometimes needed to assist people with their heavy purchases and due to the current parking situation, it's not as if they are parked right in front of the business. Mr. Anderson says that he cannot produce more parking in front of the businesses, rather there is a need for people to walk to and from businesses and his department is trying to include accessibility issues in the planning. Ms. Peterson mentions that this presentation is talking about a large plan and we would like to have input on all of it, but if we look at the smaller parts, one component is wider sidewalks which may have more opportunity for customers to have front access to the store. Mr. DuBaldo states that if there are 10 parking spaces currently blocked off on the street parking of this block and the lack of those 10 spaces is having a markedly negative affect on businesses, if that block were to lose 2/3 of the current parking places to paralell parking there's no net gain or net neutral for that block. Mr. Ambia notes that he has paralell parking on the block where his buildings are, it is quite frequent that customers on that block are not able to park due to lack of space and he feels that people are literally unable to park due to lack of parking skill-set. He further notes that one tenant said he moved because his clients were unable to paralell park. Mr. Roberts concurs that paralell parking is more dangerous when you open your car door into traffic. Mr. Anderson does not believe it is any less difficult than reversing into moving traffic as it is now. Ms. Ringo says that she has asked many of her clients if they had to paralell park would they continue to patronize her store - they said no. Mr. Anderson mentions that another proposal for parking could entertain reverse diagonal parking. He would like to say that his department is aware that parking is definitely a challenge. He would like to reiterate that there will also be other opportunities to further the discussions going forward. He states that one large benefit with roundabouts are the pedestrian crossings and those will help make crossing the street much quicker and safer. He also notes that his department will need to work with the State on the roundabouts portion due to Main Street being a state highway. Off-street parking will increase across the street as a whole while the number of on-street spaces remains essentially the same, and that additional accessible parking spaces will be incorporated throughout. His department estimates that the total timeline is about a season and a half for Charter Oak Street through Forest Street. Ms. Ringo inquires about public restrooms and wonders if we encourage people to "hang out" on the street will there be facilities available? Mr. Anderson says that one of the many ideas in this proposal was to include public restrooms in the plan. Ms. Keune agrees that public restrooms are necessary. Mr. Mulligan doesn't feel that the restrooms would be cleaned or policed appropriately. Mr. Sulick states that he does allow the general public to use the restrooms at his business and oftentimes will give them a brownie when they leave. He feels that it's a critical decision for us to build their customer base. While Mr. Sulick does like the plan he feels that outdoor dining was brought about because of COVID, now that's done he believes the on-street dining should end; he doesn't feel it's a good solution for bringing people Downtown. However, the parking issues are really where he worries. Mr. Sulick also worries about the former Tong building and taking up parking spaces there. He mentions that when he was on the DMSSD there were two main concerns, one was parking the other was snow removal; we got very little cooperation from the Town or

Police about what we needed and those issues weren't solved in the 8 years he was on the board and so he wonders if the Town will be cooperative about working with the District and its members. Ms. Peterson would like to mention, if anyone is not familiar, that the Town uses "Your Voice Matters" which is a way for the Town to stay in contact with residents. This page has a receptacle for what we talked about today and presents the groundwork for where we are today and why. This will also be the best place to keep tabs on the project and upcoming meetings/workshops about this and other Town improvement plans. Ms. Sottile would like to know when this is done, how do we know what costs the District will be responsible for and what the Town will be paying for? Mr. Anderson replies that because the plans are not set in stone yet, we will have to discuss that going forward. Ms. LeBel would like to see increased advertising and signage about businesses being open and available during construction.

Public Comment:

- Nothing at this time

Manager's Report:

- Ms. LeBel received a call from Pam Marvasti about the barriers at Angry Egg and how they are affecting her customers from accessing her business; the outdoor seating permit is in place through the fall and her landlord had to sign off on the permit so Ms. LeBel recommended that Ms. Marvasti have a conversation with her landlord about the current and/or future permits. Ms. Marvasti also wanted a handicapped space added to the block, even though it would effectively cost an additional parking space. Ms. LeBel received a call from an individual who utilizes the handicapped space at Watkins (when she can and it's not blocked off by someone parking on the crosshatches) and wonders why there aren't curb cuts for that parking space. Ms. LeBel notes that the constables are aware of people parking on the crosshatch and will do their best to step up enforcement of that particular violation. Ms. Peterson states that accessibility issues are a number of items her department is trying to incorporate into the parking for the streets plan. Mr. Anderson agrees that Main Street is not very accessible right now, perhaps Jim Mayer will be able to address that constituent's specific concerns about the accessibility. Ms. LeBel was in contact with the Chamber of Commerce to see if they could provide someone to replace Alex Lehofer. She also picked up a listing of the taxable properties from the Assessor's office to help us create an inventory of owners and operators to better get in contact with them and see if there are interested individuals in joining the board. She notes that businesses installing signage without permits remains a problem – Mr. Anderson agrees and clarifies yes, with flashing signs and signs covering too much of their windows but states that it's on his department's radar. Ms. LeBel received a call from an individual who is opening up a restaurant in the former Lucky Taco space. She is excited about opening an English Pub style called Audacity around the end of August. She mentioned that when she was setting up her business, she went to zoning and they sent her to the health department. Mr. Mulligan asks Mr. Anderson who helps new businesses in other parts of town? Mr. Anderson states that there is no one person to do that but we are willing to talk about the process with anyone. Ms. Jeffery says if there is a new business that opens up and you don't give them the information and that business then gets in trouble for violating regulations, it's not very friendly. Ms. LeBel informs

the Board that there was a \$500 membership renewal from the CT Main Street Association; Ms. Dzialo notes that it was a budgeted item and should be renewed, Mr. Fagan concurs. Ms. LeBel further reports that the trolley rental was \$990 and was very popular activity for the Butterfly Stroll. However, we will not know if it is available until January. Ms. Dzialo thinks it is a great opportunity, but part of the appeal for the Butterfly Stroll was that there were many Town events which coincided with the stroll, without those activities it would not be worthwhile to rent the trolley again. Ms. Zackin-states that there are possibilities with events across the Town for the coming year. Ms. LeBel also reports that she delivered the constable jackets to Artisan Ink and a sample of the embroidering was provided and met her satisfaction.

Cultural Arts District:

- Ms. Zackin informs the Board that she is submitting an application to have two designations for a cultural arts districts which will cover between the Lutz Children's Museum to Charter Oak and from there to Cheney Hall.

GMCC:

- None present

Permit Process:

- Mr. Anderson reports that there was a meeting about two weeks ago and the process was nearing completion.

Finance:

- 22/23 YTD – Ms. LeBel reports that revenue projections from citations and parking rents are not complete (we still have May and June to include) \$170,316.35 is the projected year-to-date total but compared to expenses, we may not be over as we were last year. Salaries are right on-point, professional development, repairs, printing, festivals are all under; the cell phone bill is \$123 over our budget.

Parking:

- Decorative Sign – Ms. LeBel has been in communication with Jim Mayer about correcting the signage in the free lots and the enhanced sign at Purnell. As far as the informational signs, it will be a long time before they get installed due to the department being very busy. Ms. Peterson suggests getting in touch with the communications department to see if there are ways they can assist.
- Parking Brochure/Passport – Ms. LeBel had requested training from Passport about permit holders utilizing multiple plates and parking at the same time – though she notes that there have not been any violations at this point. There was a resident who had multiple cars on his permit parked at the same time. Mr. Mulligan believes that employees would not be parking two cars at once because they can only drive one at a time; residents would be parking at least one car at a time and would require one permit per car parked. Ms. LeBel informs the Board

that there was a parking permit approval from someone who was not in-district, however they will not be allowed to renew their permit. She notes that one thing Passport has been working on is a group permit so that certain groups can manage their own permits. There was an issue with a group payment which has not been resolved yet. Ms. LeBel received contact from a local business which purchased three permits from the Town; for three permits which were only valid for 14 days instead of three months. Passport informed Ms. LeBel that there are two payment cycles available, a rolling (from the date of purchase) and a cycle block of three months (regardless of start date). That issue has been remedied. The constables inquired about the parallel parking around CVS and the handicap spaces near Army/Navy. The Board agreed that the street parking is enforceable, private lots are not.

Marketing:

- Ms. Press provided some notes about the events in the past and planned in the future. She mentioned that some businesses have requested and received help with their Locable accounts. Mr. Burkamp would like to purchase 500 pumpkins again for Halloween but needs help with delivery – Mr. Mulligan suggests contacting the farm he purchases the pumpkins from directly to ask if delivery is an option. Giverrang is a gift card which can be used at any/all Downtown businesses and could be an avenue for a District-wide gift card. Ms. Press says there is no specific cost to the District but fees would be applied at the purchase. She will schedule an update with the company to discuss it further.

Maintenance & Beautification:

- The contract with Downtown Decorations expires in January, the District will need to put an updated quote for the decoration and banner install. Ms. Sottile has expressed interest in assisting with the banner design. She suggests considering pedestrian-level banners and sizing for those in consideration of the new streetscape updates. Flowers - Star Hardware mentioned their flowers were dead, Ms. LeBel reports that the pansies cost \$900 for two months of plantings. She will contact Woodland Gardens to see if there is a multi-season planting that would be suitable for the planters.

Constituent Support Report:

- None present

Downtown Development Specialist Report:

- Nothing further

Old Business:

- None at this time

New Business:

- Ms. Dzialo would like to resign as Commission Chair but will retain her seat on the board. Mr.

DuBaldo mentions that Ms. Jeffery is willing to sit on the Board. Mr. Ambia would like to sit with another member (Ms. Dzialo and Ms. LeBel volunteer) to discuss additional options.

Public Comment:

- Ms. Ringo states that her customers have noted that panhandling is way up now that the good weather is here – one of her customers was asked three times (separate individuals) between Work_Space and Purnell Place. Ms. LeBel will make contact with the police about the individuals who hang out at the ATM and ask for money and those who are aggressive. There are also concerns about rolling Saturday coverage and staggered constable shifts to provide better enforcement. The Board is amenable to bringing Saturday coverage back if the constituents feel it is necessary.
- Ms. Sottile notes that one of the tenants in her building is using an A-Frame to advertise their business which does not comply with zoning/permitting.
- Mr. Mulligan says the the District is supposed to assist businesses starting, not enforcing the Town's codes. Especially if the Town doesn't let us know.
- Ms. Sottile would like to see increased communication with landlords so they could better inform the District of incoming tenants and thereby provide those tenants with the information they need to abide by regulations. Also, she believes the condo owners (who are property owners) could prove to be a wealth of information/ability for Board positions.
- Mr. Fagan suggests having the parking constables attend a meeting so that we can find information about their processes.
- Ms. Dzialo wonders if the current parking program hasn't worked for 20+ years, why continue? If we want quick in-and-out, Main Street is the way to go and long-term parking remains in the lots. Perhaps the parking committee can look at the streetscape plans and see what we can be done to make the parking plans that are best for us.

Adjourn

- There being no further business a motion to adjourn is made by Mr. Fagan at 10:29AM, seconded by Mr. Mulligan. All approve.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nicholas DuBaldo, Secretary DMSSD

Recorder