

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

**November 08, 2023
8 AM**

Meeting held at Work_Space, 903 Main Street

MEMBERS PRESENT: Daniel Mulligan, Acting Chair
Nicholas DuBaldo, Secretary
Sophia Dzialo
Ryan Fagan
Esther Jeffery

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

ALSO PRESENT: Peter Miller, William Barry, Dave Krinjak, Mark Matheney,
Richard Clark, Kathy Hatch, Tom Tomko, Kirk Allison, TJ Sodhi,
Amy Coniam, Arthur Hatch, Louis Palterio, Joe Datta, Robert
Sulick, Brandon Farr, Jay Moran, Mark Connors, Bob Schneider,
Pam Marvasti, Jay Roberts, Tom Tierney, Beth Ringo

STAFF PRESENT: Bernie LeBel, Downtown Manager

MEMBERS ABSENT: Tarek Ambia, Finance Chair
Joseph Lipiner

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS
ABSENT: Millie Texidor – GMCC Representative

Call to Order:

- Mr. Mulligan calls the meeting to order at 8:06 AM

Roll Call:

- Mr. Mulligan noted those present and absent.

Minutes:

- A motion to approve the minutes of October 11, 2023 is made by Ms. Jeffery seconded by Ms. Dzialo; Mr. DuBaldo notes a few spelling mistakes which will be corrected. All approve.

Public Comment:

- Mr. Tomko (see attached packet) – In compiling this document, Mr. Tomko says that he reached ~98% of business owners within the Downtown. He notes that he was on this board roughly 30 years ago when it was decided to purchase/lease the various parking lots in this area as those lots were going

to be developed if the District didn't purchase/lease them. He states that his office manager grew up in Winsted where they have parallel parking and she has informed Mr. Tomko that the winter time is terrible for parking in Winstead. Mr. Tomko mentions that LaSalle Road in Downtown West Hartford used to have parallel parking and have since converted back to angled. Mr. Tomko was with Ms. LeBel and the CT Main Street Center, and they informed him that they would like to further communicate about rebranding the Downtown.

- Mr. Krinjak comments on the parallel parking from Park St. through Locust St. And that the bulk of Main Street got rid of parallel parking about 30 years ago because it doesn't work effectively. He feels that people bypass those sections and it's a constant accident waiting to happen and happens with frequency. He states being deadset against parallel parking
- Mr. Moran states that the Town is nowhere near a final plan.
- Mr. Tomko reminds Mr. Moran that it's about the survival of business in the District, that the plans can't damage the businesses.
- Mr. Moran clarifies that the proposal is not going to put bikes on the sidewalk and that he will share the proposal information with the new Town Board of Directors. He also mentions that St. James Church is doing a feasibility study right now and there's a possibility that mass schedules will increase here.
- Mr. Tomko states that he doesn't want the Town to spend money and resources on any plan that involves parallel parking.
- Ms. Hatch inquires of Mr. Moran to ask if the money can be used to change out the lead pipes feeding the Town?
- Mr. Moran acknowledges that the longer we wait to improve infrastructure, the more it costs.
- Mr. Tomko furthers up that there's discussions about the drainage issues on Birch Street.
- Mr. Barry feels that Mr. Moran and the Directors don't understand the benefits of the plan as it is.
- Mr. Moran would like to understand everyone's opinions and encourages the discourse.
- Ms. Hatch states that in her opinion, parallel parking is a very bad idea.
- Mr. Moran says that it's clear that the Downtown doesn't want parallel and the roundabouts. However, it's also the people behind the wheels of the cars on the road that is a driving issue with our street's traffic problems.

- Ms. Coniam believes that I think it's a horrible idea. The concept of having more outdoor space available when we have 6-7 months of cold weather doesn't really make sense. She wonders if people will bike here in the cold?
- Mr. Barry inquires about the benefits of the bike path? It seems very dangerous to him to walk on a path with bikers.
- Mr. Anderson clarifies that this is still a concept plan and we will continue to listen to the owners about their concerns and appreciate everyone's desires to figure out a way to make things work.
- Mr. Miller Gives a little history on the Army & Navy club. The Club was formed in 1919; we also included the Air Force and Marines because they were parts of the two branches. He states that the club is primarily a social group and without use of the Forest Street Lot, those veterans served by the club will disappear with no other place to go. They put their lives at risk for us and there is a need to maintain the lot which in turn, maintains the club's viability.
- Mr. Connors asks what is driving the plan? Is it a pile of money that needs to be spent?
- Mr. Barry feels that this plan isn't what makes Manchester special.
- Mr. Sulick thinks the important thing is that we're looking at an area of Town that hasn't had an update since 1991. Some of the crosswalks are literally peeling up.
- Ms. Coniam believes the historic beauty of Main Street is here and it functions; she don't see a lot of bikers on the street.
- Mr. Sulick believes that we have to consider what bicyclists mean, what our Downtown looks like when/if we decide to retire. What is our customer base? How do we attract the people we want? He is not a big fan of parallel parking, and states that he was excluded from a meeting because people thought he supported parallel parking, but he recognizes that nothing in this plan is written in stone yet.
- Ms. Coniam reiterates the questions of why does the District need it?
- Mr. Sulick believes that things change and we need to change with it. Main Street was built for horses and buggies not cars. Mr. Sulick states that he is not a fan of the "Sturbridge Village" look. He does, however, advocate for rotaries as drivers don't have to hit the brakes or the gas to get through. He questions why we're looking at the Road Race, which is roughly 20 minutes during one day of the year to eliminate those rotaries. He feels that there's a perception that rotaries are dangerous; he hasn't see people having issues crossing the street or driving through.

- Mr. Barry asks if this is a Green New Deal plan? He says there had been discussion about installing a two lane highway up by Case Mountain, but thankfully, that never happened.
- Mr. Anderson would like to correct a few things: this is not a concrete plan and we are listening to the comments and suggestions.
- Mr. Mulligan asks Mr. Anderson what the process and schedule is?
- Mr. Anderson reports that the Town will lay the concept over the survey before we talk about the details of the plan and get more specific comments about the plan; it's over a year from now. Why are we doing this? Safety and accessibility. Unfortunately, there have been several pedestrian and vehicular accidents - sometimes fatal. This is the heart of our community; we want this place to be better, it's not just a place to go through, it's a place to be. The big part is making people feel safe and comfortable, having things to move about safely and have them have places to go to. Many members of the community mentioned having a bike lane as a desired feature Downtown because it's dangerous as it is. Cyclists are one piece of the puzzle but not a driver. He states that we have the Cheney Rail trail and the Greenway and that they are not linked. He hasn't heard much support about having four lanes and getting stuck behind someone making a left turn. Another big issue that needs to be remedied is a lot of the infrastructure needs to be updated; while we do that, the Town would like to make Main Street look better with bricks, trees, signals... The traffic signals alone are several million dollars. He knows that there are different opinions to get there and his department is open to discussion and input. The concept plan shows no net loss of parking, though he'll need to look at the numbers from Mr. Tomko before speaking about those specifically. There are also some off-street options which may be available that are not in the concept plan. The ideas aren't in a black hole somewhere and we need time to take the comments into consideration.
- Ms. Hatch inquires about loading and unloading?
- Mr. Anderson states that it's a unique place and we do need to address those concerns. There are things here which make us special and changing one thing makes changes to other areas. We're limited on space to maneuver with the desires and needs.
- Mr. Hatch asks that seeing as we have a police presence on Main Street, why don't we pull people over again and enforce traffic regulations?
- Mr. Clark - Asks where would Cruisin' on Main would go if islands appear on Main Street?
- Mr. Anderson states that there are no islands proposed.

- Mr. Connors states that the one thing he hasn't heard about us being a destination area is that Main Street is the only roadway to connect Vernon and Glastonbury - regardless of what updates we do, trucks and high traffic are going to commute through the street. How will the Town move that traffic through? We have to deal with the fact that we're on a busy street and he has explored bypass routes but those aren't possible for the amount of traffic Main Street has.
- Mr. Anderson says that Mr. Sulick mentioned that when vehicles don't idle, they can go slow. If you're able to slow things down at the ends the traffic can move smoothly through. He agrees that pedestrians are challenging with rotaries and we'll have to chat about that later on.
- Mr. Datta believes that updating is a good idea for the Downtown. His needs for in-and-out customers is different than someone who needs half hour, one hour, two hour spaces available. He would like to see how the proposal can be adjusted to fit all of those needs.

District Chair Report:

- Nothing at this time

Manager's Report:

- Ms. LeBel reports that she has been communicating with someone at 599 Main who is very concerned about the parking situation around that property. They would like to know where the dumpsters will be located and who would have access, how many spaces will be available to the renters? Also, what and when the restaurant would have access to. She informs the Board that there are some residential renters who are using the Pearl Street lot for overnight parking. Mr. Anderson says that the Town has allowed for the ability for overnight parking in that lot with a permit. Ms. LeBel received a call from Mr. Burkamp expressing disappointment at the tree-lighting being held at Center Congregational Church rather than in the Downtown. Ms. LeBel further reports that on Friday the 27th, a donation was made in memoriam for Rev. Kalinsky using our hospitality funds. Carl Rosa and the CT Main Street Center were asked to visit roughly 30 businesses Downtown to inform them about low interest loans from \$5,000 to \$500,000 for the CT Boost Fund. Those they visited were very enthusiastic about the program.

Finance:

- 23/24 - Ms. LeBel reports that the current spreadsheet has been updated to show more details in response to last month's meeting. She had hoped to have a proposed budget for this meeting but was unable to have that wrapped up in time. It will go out later in an e-mail. She also contacted the Assessor's Office about getting estimations for our working tax revenue.
- Payroll by Employee - Ms. LeBel requested a payroll report July through

October which is attached to the packet.

Parking:

- Ms. LeBel reports that she received 30 resumes for the constable posting and she contacted 23 of those; 10 of those were forwarded over to the Parking Committee for further review. Of those, four will be furthered through interview. Ms. LeBel reached out to Passport about a license plate reader sample and they provided a video, not an actual reader. There was also a follow-up email sent about the status of the additional information we requested but have not yet heard in response to that. She says that while we know how many tickets have been issued, we don't know how many are paid and they are looking into getting that information into a printout. She states that the police likewise have not been able to provide that data.

Marketing:

- Ms. Press did not provide a written report. Ms. LeBel reports that she has scheduled the trolley for the holiday event and that Santa will appear at that event as well as the tree-lighting ceremony at Center Congregational Church.

Maintenance & Beautification:

- Ms. LeBel notes that the decorations contract has been combined with the banners for 4 years; it went out Oct. 27 and will close today. There were some concerns about issuing a 4 year contract due to the street updates, she asked if the Town Engineers would keep our mounting in mind when they select appropriate poles or provide updated brackets if the poles are not compatible with our brackets.
- Snowflake Images - Ted at Downtown Decorations suggested some other decorations similar to what the committee selected.
- Ms. LeBel reports that the contract with Jayscape has the option to renew, a letter has been sent out to ask if he would like to renew the contract.

Constituent Support Report:

- Not at this time

Downtown Development Specialist Report:

- Mr. Anderson reports that Beahive recieved a grant to relocate to the Lenox Plaza from the former Tong Building; that grant is still open and available. He states that a sign and light video should be sent out to the constituents down here as there are signs that don't conform to zoning guidelines.
- Mr. Mulligan asks what can the Board's ability be to get involved with the streetscape plan?

- Mr. Anderson says that Part of the next round of engagement will be to invite people to see the plan and provide input on the plan.
- Ms. Jeffery states that there is a misconception that we as the Board are involved in this process and that's where a lot of the anger seems to come from.
- Mr. Mulligan also states that the District is a parking authority and a large part of this proposed process is parking yet we aren't involved in the project. Our constituents would like us to be more involved in the process and we would like to be allowed to be more involved in the process.
- Mr. Anderson states that the District was not included because there's no subcommittee; it's difficult to include others but we'll see what can happen. Engineering comes up with the plan prior to even me seeing it.

Old Business:

- A motion to allocate \$3000 from salaries to contract with Tana Parseliti to assist the District and the District Manager is made by Ms. Dzialo seconded by Ms. Jeffery. All approve. Ms. LeBel will consult with HR and arrange for that as well as the constable hiring.

New Business:

- None at this time

Public Comment:

- None at this time

Other Business:

- None at this time

Adjourn

- There being no further business a motion to adjourn is made by Ms. Dzialo at 10:01 AM, seconded by Ms. Jeffery. All approve.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nicholas DuBaldo, Secretary DMSSD

Recorder