

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

February 14, 2024

8 AM

Meeting held at Work_Space, 903 Main Street

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

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT:

ALSO PRESENT: Tom Tomko, Concilla Ndlovu, Emma Petersen, William O'Neil,
Thomas Tierney

STAFF PRESENT: Bernie LeBel, Downtown Manager

MEMBERS ABSENT: Joseph Lipiner

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS
ABSENT: Gary Anderson, Director Planning and Development
Millie Texidor - GMCC Representative

Call to Order:

- Mr. Mulligan calls the meeting to order at 8:05 AM

Roll Call:

- Mr. Mulligan noted those present and absent.

Public Comment:

- Mr. O'Neil states that he and Mr. Tierney will be applying to the League of American Bicyclists for recognition that Manchester is a bike-friendly town. He supports the a resolution of seeking the recognition of the League but cautions that the bike path Downtown does not apply to the scope of their application. He would also like to remind everyone that May 17 is National Bike to Work Day; he encourages any local business to provide water or snacks to those bikers. He would like to see bike tool racks and bike lockers available in and around the Downtown to those partaking in cycling at any time of year. He plans on meeting with the Chamber of Commerce to ask for their support as well. Mr. O'Neil provides a map detailing the progress of years of improvements as well as a detail sheet about where new parks and

trails could be installed or created here in town. He commends Mr. Tomko on raising concerns about the Downtown Improvements Project so that the designers of that plan can respond and address those concerns.

Mr. Tierney understands that there he been some criticism about the Downtown reconstruction plans, and reiterates that is not what he and Mr. O'Neil are here to discuss.

Mr. Tomko states that he was a proponent of the bridge in Center Springs and he feels that it is not well-utilized. He looks forward to whatever comes in the future; even if it's something like the Flower Bridge in Simsbury.

Mr. O'Neil states that they are planning on making their request to the League on April 1, 2024.

Ms. Petersen says the Manchester Plan of Conservation and Development also supports this plan; knowing that the designation has a Bronze, Silver, Gold level does assist in other grant processes.

Mr. O'Neil informs the Board that their 89 page application does need to encompass the different groups that support this movement. He thanks the Board and the Town for the process of what you're undergoing on Main Street; by getting the issues up responsibly, it makes way for progress.

Mr. Tomko would like to see and hear better communication about the plans that involve the Downtown, even at the Town level.

Ms. Petersen agrees that is something they do need to work on.

Mr. Tomko considers the bike lockers installed along the bike path at Charter Oak and he likes that idea. Mr. O'Neil thinks that they seem to be a well-kept secret. The lockers do get used but not as much as he would like. Mr. Tomko thinks that the open shed concept would be a good style. Mr. O'Neil believes the technology available for those lockers now is quite impressive; lockers are even able to accept credit cards.

Mr. Tomko doesn't feel that the bike striping around Farr's, Chick-fil-A, is not something that he would be comfortable to ride on. Ms. Petersen says that there is a certain amount of space that they have to work with on streets, so some lanes are more limited than others.

Mr. Tomko recalls Spruce Street roughly 30 years ago, the Town thought about getting rid of the sidewalks on one side of the street; if they had taken that sidewalk, it could have been converted to a bike path *and* increased the road width.

Ms. Peterson states that the project on Main Street also connects to other projects and initiatives. Like the connection between the Rail Trail and the Greenway.

Mr. O'Neil respects the decision to bring Mark Connor's plan to the forefront which would better connect the rail trail and the Mill Apartments to Main Street. He would like to not just stop at the library, but would like to see improvements on Trotter Street and make the plan a "complete street".

Ms. Petersen declares that the side-street projects aren't mutually exclusive.

Mr. O'Neil would like to explore the possibility to tune in to a radio station which talks about the History of Downtown as you pass through?

Mr. Tomko feels that town planners don't understand the history of the District. Talking about things like the cycle lanes on Main Street, that might negatively impact many people who have spent significant money on improving their properties and/or businesses. He would rather connect Main Street and have the cyclists become pedestrians while on the street which would encourage them to do business here. His group talked with many business owners at Blue Back Square who are losing 40 spaces in their redevelopment. While the west side of our Main Street will be less impacted by the bike lane, he wonders if it wouldn't be better to have the business-side have the bike lane?

Ms. Petersen clarifies that perhaps West Hartford has a plan to lose spaces, but Manchester does not. The initial concept plan has been updated which does integrate more angled spaces into the new plan. The concept still has the 950-ish parking spaces that exist down here. We do want to increase the amount of safety available as well as retain the business access.

Mr. Tomko asks if it would it be too much to ask to have a three concept plan available? Like with the cycle track on the east side?

Ms. Petersen encourages Mr. Tomko to express those ideas to engineering at one of the open houses.

Mr. O'Neil hopes the planners have reached out to get the census of the users of the multi-use paths here in town on a yearly basis. He would also like to meet with Jeff LaMalva and Gary Anderson.

Ms. Petersen states that March 7 and 12 will be the next open houses which she invites them both to attend.

Minutes:

- A motion to approve the minutes of January 10, 2024 is made by Mr. Fagan, seconded by Mr. Ambia. All approve.
- A motion to support the May 17, 2024 Bike to Work Day (7-12) with a budget not to exceed \$100 is made by Ms. Jeffery, seconded by Ms. Dzialo. All approve.

District Chair Report:

- Nothing at this time

Manager's Report:

- Ms. LeBel reports that she has not heard back about additional recycling containers being made available on the street. She also received comments about the gate between Heritage and Bray's Jewelers and how unwelcoming it looks being closed off. Mr. Tomko notes that alley is privately owned and that Ms. LeBel is welcome to check with Heritage and see if they have changed their stance on opening the path. Ms. LeBel also received a number of complaints about the amount of trash on the street likely due to the lack of trash receptacles available on the street during the winter months. Ms. LeBel reached out to the contractor who promised to make a visit. Mr. Ambia wonders why there are fewer receptacles on his block each year. He used to have three, now only has one. If there is a reduction policy, he would like to know what it is and how can it be altered to accommodate for the increase in trash. Ms. LeBel reports that the contact list continues to grow; Ms. Press has assisted with the creation of mailing and e-mailing list. Mr. Tomko would also like to see if the District's ability to contact could be broadened out to include text messages. Ms. LeBel received a communication from Mr. Lipiner expressing his need to resign due to business responsibilities.

Special Meeting:

- A special meeting to discuss the proposed slate on 2-28-24 - March 13 is the deadline of when the slate needs to be approved by. A motion to convene a meeting on the 28th for the purpose of voting on the slate is made by Ms. Jeffery, seconded by Mr. Ambia. All approve. Ms. LeBel will notify the Town. An amendment to the motion to also include the approval of the budget is made by Ms. Jeffery, seconded by Mr. Ambia. All approve.

Finance:

- 23/24 Budget – 23/34 FY Budget – Ms. LeBel reports that Ms. Parseliti should be in a different line other than “Employees” which means that we are slightly over budget on the line item relevant to her. She further reports that we are still awaiting our next deposit of tax revenue.
- Employee Spreadsheet of Payroll – Ms. LeBel reports that November and December had several paid holidays which is why those months were slightly higher than expected.
- Proposed 24/25 Budget – Ms. LeBel states that the District will be paying the third installment of \$700 to Locable; in the future, the hosting and interface will increase to \$1300 as the original contract specified. Mr. Tomko asks about the repairs and maintenance payments and the snow removal. Ms. LeBel states that those are our landscaping contract and the Town's charge

for removing excess snow (if needed). Mr. Mulligan asks regarding the 24/25 tax revenue, did the Assessor's office ever get back with the information? Ms. LeBel replied they did not, they instructed us to set our rate and they will adjust accordingly.

Parking:

- Ms. LeBel received an inquiry from a tenant who resides in an apartment on Main Street and is handicapped. Ms. LeBel will ask him to inquire with his landlord about creating a marked space in that property's parking lot but states there is no overnight parking on Main Street during the winter months.
- Ms. LeBel reports that the broken receipt printer has started working again. Also, the ticket that she applied for about permit extensions in November has been responded to and they claim the process is working as intended. Ms. Jeffery expresses her disappointment about Passport's inability to produce the documentation and results we need. Ms. Dzialo would like to see a reduction in their fees for the coming year due to their inability to produce our reasonable requests. On January 23 and February 8, Ms. LeBel requested information about the fee structure for the tickets. She also had an inquiry about a parking permit for residents but that individual doesn't live in the district. Mr. Tomko recommends that individual contact the owner of the private lot behind Army & Navy to see if a space can be rented there.

Marketing:

- Nothing at this time

Maintenance & Beautification:

- Ms. LeBel states that we have engaged Mountain View Landscaping as our new contractor and are awaiting their insurance documents. There were issues of broken glass in the parking lot behind Watkins. She notes that Purchasing has received all the necessary information to allow us to go forward with the banner program and e-mails to the existing supporters have been issued.
- Banners – Ms. Petersen informs the Board that Work_Space is having a veterans exhibit this year. Ms. LeBel reports that the veterans group inquired about using the top ten spaces near the Center Memorial Park for their banners this year as “The Wall” is coming to the park this year. The Downtown Decorations truck was damaged (not on our site) and the removal of the wraps and bows has been delayed. Ms. LeBel asks the Board whether the District would like to have a banner again this year. Ms. Dzialo feels that if we sell out, we sell out; if not, we could explore a single banner.

Nominating Committee:

- Mr. DuBaldo notes that the only request for future nominations he received was from Mr. Datta. Now that Mr. Lipiner has resigned, we do have two spaces available for Mr. Tomko and Mr. Datta.

Constituent Support Report:

- Not at this time

Downtown Development Specialist Report:

- Ms. Petersen is reaching out to the businesses who were not able to attend the first open house to encourage them to attend the future meetings.

Old Business:

- None at this time

New Business:

- Nomination of Thomas Tomko and Joseph Datta for interim Position on Board of Commissioners - A motion is made by Mr. Ambia, seconded by Mr. Fagan. All approve.

Public Comment:

- Mr. Clark has observed that there aren't many barrels available. Ms. LeBel informs Mr. Clark that the Town removes many of the them from the road race through winter due to snow removal concerns. Mr. Clark feels that trash is a 12 month issue, not an 8 or 9 month issue. He states that he would like to see the manager position increased to closer to full-time.

Other Business:

- None at this time

Adjourn

- There being no further business a motion to adjourn is made by Mr. Ambia at 9:31 AM, seconded by Mr. Fagan. All approve.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nicholas DuBaldo, Secretary DMSSD

Recorder