



TOWN OF THOMPSON

Mill Sites Redevelopment
Advisory Committee (MSRAC)

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Regular MEETING- MSRAC

Mill Sites Redevelopment Advisory Committee (MSRAC)

Friday – December 9, 2022 – 9:00 AM

Hybrid – Merrill Seney Community Room and Zoom

Link to Zoom Recording: https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/Xv-SvFzXb4w3pl38aAXQZQ2cQ6X8NcnmOQRUTyrioN96fHHziZvI4j9-sWy7KvBF.meA2qYZNNox2_6by?startTime=1670594511000

Passcode: w?%29fF=

Link to YouTube Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJZqxQcR80Y>

Members Attending: J. Blanchette – Chair, K. Beausoleil, R. Cournoyer, B. Davis, J. Hall, C. Langlois, N. O'Leary

Staff Attending: T. Penn-Gesek – Director of Planning & Development

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER – 9:02 a.m.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

November 10, 2022 MSRAC Special Meeting

C. Langlois moves, B. Davis seconds approval of the minutes. Passes unanimously

November 17, 2022 MSRAC Special Meeting

J. Hall moves, B. Davis seconds approval of the minutes. Passes unanimously.

3. CORRESPONDENCE - none

4. CITIZEN COMMENTS - none

5. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

a. Riverside Drive LOTCIP Sidewalk Project

Since the site walk there have been 2 meetings at the parking area for the restaurant. State Sen. Flexer came out on Friday 2 Dec to hear the concerns that had previously been raised by the building owner. A subsequent meeting was held on Wed 7 Dec with 5 staff members from CT DOT, including the local project inspectors and engineers from the traffic and safety divisions. The building owner and restaurant owner were also in attendance, along with the First Selectman, Y. Lin from Freeman and T. Penn. The stakeholders described the impact of the current approved plan on the restaurant & hair salon. The engineers conferred on a number of options that could alleviate the problem while still satisfying DOT's safety concerns. Y. Lin will create a concept sketch to pass along to DOT, to determine whether traffic & safety would agree to a lease of the 2 proposed parking spaces in the revised concept. DOT will then work to get a rough estimate from ROW for the amount of that lease, for the building owner to make a decision as to whether or not to accept that. Y. Lin has confirmed that the current LOTCIP budget should be able to accommodate the potential change order.

The DOT staff, Y. Lin and T. Penn also reviewed the incomplete crosswalk from the sidewalk to the gas station/convenience store. DOT staff halted work on that crosswalk during construction because the inspector noticed that the crosswalk on this project was in conflict with a pre-existing plan at the dept to install a crosswalk with beacon a few feet to the north. It is unclear what the final resolution of that element will be.

b. Main Street Reconstruction

Freeman has been out to survey the project area. Y. Lin suggested that, if there is a possibility that decorative lights will be installed along Rte 12, then the Main St design project could also include that in their estimate. J. Blanchette suggests that the committee members should drive along Main St in the evening to try to determine whether additional lighting is needed in the neighborhood. J. Blanchette also suggests that, as the large properties on Main St are redeveloped, if a particular decorative street lamp fixture is chosen by the town, that the developers be requested to include those in their site plans. N. O'Leary asks about resources that may be available to neighborhood property owners to rehab their own buildings. T. Penn describes the Rehabilitation District assessment incentive that was adopted by the Town to encourage construction or renovation of multi-family housing. C. Langlois asks whether decorative lighting had been considered when applying for the Riverside Drive sidewalk grant. It had not been considered until too late in the process, so it was not included in the final plan. The committee members discuss possibly adding some decorative lighting to a certain portion of Riverside Drive, to aesthetically define a downtown loop. J. Blanchette points out that any such lights would have to be solar-powered, and the per-unit cost for those is relatively high.

c. Update MSRAC web site page

i. "What we Do" description

J. Blanchette had sent a document with suggested updates for the committee's webpage. The committee members are given "homework" to review it and provide comments or additional edits. T. Penn brings up the EDC page as an example of a more detailed committee page, which was created by Kelsey from CHA with some of the BAR grant funds. She also brings up the "Find Your Way" pages created by R. Waldron for comparison. J. Blanchette wants to know the best way to add content about MSRAC's projects. B. Davis asks to look at the Conservation Commission page, which he worked on when it was migrated to the Town website from its own independent location. B. Davis agrees to take on the task, since he had previously worked on the Conservation pages. J. Blanchette wants to check with the Selectmen's Office to confirm that the charge of the committee is as she has described in the sample document. R. Cournoyer comments that there should be more content related to business or industrial development. The item will be on the agenda for January to further discuss the suggested content prior to making the changes.

ii. Members – Bernie missing, Ryan Cournoyer alternate member

d. 2023 meeting schedule

The 2023 meeting schedule will be on the same pattern as prior years, the 2nd Friday of each month at 9 a.m.: 13 Jan, 10 Feb, 10 Mar, 14 Apr, 12 May, 9 June, 14 July, 11 Aug, 8 Sep, 13 Oct, 10 Nov, 8 Dec.

N. O'Leary moves, R. Cournoyer seconds to approve the 2023 meeting schedule. Passes unanimously.

e. Additional street lights on util poles over new sidewalk

J. Blanchette brought large-format copies of the site plans for the sidewalks, with the intention of the members attending in person going over the plans and choosing locations to relocate and/or add street lights. She suggests that the members should stay after the rest of the meeting to mark up the plans. N. O'Leary asks whether the homeowners along Riverside Drive will be given the option to refuse a light proposed in front of their individual properties. MSRAC's role is to make the recommendation. It is up to the BoS to discuss and accept or reject that suggestion.

f. Swanson Park - possible T-Mobile Placemaking grant - \$50,000 shovel ready project

The site walk on 17 November concluded with the members walking the site, to make recommendations for a potential upgrade. The ideas in play are: relocating the monument from the island at the intersection of Main St/Rte 12 to the main veterans' park, replacing the overgrown bushes with something less intrusive to the sight lines within the park and along the road, repair of the concrete walkway through the park and possibly adding/improving a parking area. J. Blanchette has asked Freeman to provide the CAD drawing of the portion of the park they surveyed in relation to the sidewalk project. She will volunteer her firm to complete the rest of the survey. B. Davis asks about the timeline. In relation to the T-Mobile grant, it is a recurring grant program with rolling deadlines 3 times per year, so there is no specific urgency; however, the next deadline is 1 April. The First Selectman had agreed to reach out to the local veterans' groups, in order to get them onboard with the project from the start prior to any plans being developed. T. Penn will follow up with the First Selectman regarding that conversation.

g. Blain Road Intersection paving

At the site visit on 7 Dec, T. Penn had mentioned this project to the DOT staff in attendance. R. Champan from the department checked his emails and confirmed that he received the revised plan on 28 November. T. Penn will check back in with R. Chapman regarding an updated approval. J. Blanchette will arrange a meeting with Chief Sharpe from Community Fire to look at alternate areas for the fire trucks to park when they need to draw water from the river. T. Penn will make a point to also attend that meeting.

h. River Mill

A final draft of the agreement with DECD has been approved by the Town and the developer and sent over to DECD. DECD needs to sign first, then the two grant partners will sign. T. Penn is hopeful that the contract will be executed by the end of the calendar year.

i. 630 Riverside Drive site

Offers have been made to purchase the property, but so far there has been no acceptance by the owner. T. Penn will continue follow up with the local developer who has been making the offers. J. Hall asks whether the listing is otherwise live, and what the asking price is. T. Penn believes that the listing is not officially posted and the offers have been made behind the scenes. The last posted asking price was around \$475k. It is not known what the amount of most recent offer was. R. Cournoyer asks what the redevelopment concept is for the site. T. Penn states that she has been promoting the idea of some general forward-facing mixed-use concept, without being too specific. A combination of street-level retail/office/hospitality with further site development for outdoor recreation is the general hope. A student team from UConn is working on the outdoor recreation/green infrastructure elements of a concept plan.

j. 65 Main Street

The most recent grant from USDA UAIP will allow the development of the programming for the proposed small business support center. The final contract has not been received from USDA yet. The program development will involve a partnership of local and regional nonprofits, in a year-long workshop with community stakeholders. The USDA grant will also fund the landscape planning for the attached 3.2 acre permaculture park. One final round of grant applications for implementation costs is likely.

k. Other Committee business

R. Cournoyer is curious about the application scheduled for public hearing at the PZC meeting on 19 Dec, related to 0 Reardon Road. The application is for a propane distributor (The Spicer Group). The parcel is a part of the long-proposed industrial park. B. Davis asks if the plans are digitally accessible by the public. All applications and their related information are a part of the public record, but there is no online archive of those applications at this time.

6. MEMBER COMMENTS - none

7. ADJOURNMENT – 10:20 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tyra Penn-Gesek, Director of Planning & Development.