

TOWN OF HIGHGATE

Planning Commission

Minutes

January 6, 2014

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chariman, David Cadieux called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Present at meeting:

- **Planning Commission Members:** David Cadieux – Chairman, Woody Rouse, Rick Trombley, Pauline Decarreau, and Tim Reynolds
- **Staff:** Heidi Britch-Valenta – Planning and Zoning Administrator, and Samantha Rice – Planning and Zoning Secretary
- **Public:** Corey Mack – Sidewalk Presenter, Amanda Holland - NRPC, Liza Comidy – Sidewalk Committee, Scott Martin, Claude Chevalier and Barb Chevalier

II. OTHER BUSINESS

a. Sidewalk Presentation

The sidewalk presentation began by Mrs. Britch-Valenta introducing Mr. Corey Mack. Mr. Mack is the consultant from RSG selected by the sidewalk committee to take the Town of Highgate through the design process. For tonight's presentation Mr. Mack has put together a PowerPoint presentation to illustrate the different designs he is proposing for the addition of sidewalks in the Town of Highgate. Mr. Mack has looked at past information, like the 2007 corridor study, to put together the designs he is proposing.

At this point Mr. Mack began his presentation. Mr. Mack clarified that during this phase of the project we are still in the conceptual design period. He has already done a lot of background work, reviewed all the past studies and has seen where the sentiment lies. Now the sidewalk committee is looking at the different options.

Mr. Mack then explained, briefly, the background of the project. The purpose of the meeting is to present the alternatives and give enough information to move forward with

a preferred alignment. Then with the information from the surveyor, the Planning Commission and Mr. Mack can come up with a conceptual design. With the conceptual design the Town can look at the impacts it will make on the surrounding area and minimize those impacts. This would allow the Town to move forward with permit documents with the State, the Agency of Transportation and FHWA.

In 2007 there was a Lamkin Street corridor study. Since then Mr. Mack has been building off from that to come up with the designs he is currently presenting. The 2007 corridor study helped define the purpose of the project and the need for the project. There is no sidewalk there now but there is a demand for a sidewalk with the continuing development in the area. This segment of the sidewalk the Town is currently working with should be consistent with the whole plan.

The purpose of the project is to build upon the 2007 corridor study to design and construct a pedestrian infrastructure from the Town Offices to a terminal on Lamkin Street. In other terms the Town of Highgate would like to see a safe pedestrian connectivity from the Town Offices to the park memorial to the Town Library and to the St. Louis Church on Lamkin Street. This connectivity needs to maintain consistency with all other town documents and regional documents to accommodate future development and expanding connectivity.

Mrs. Britch-Valenta added that the original intent of the grant that the Town of Highgate received was to take the sidewalk from the town offices, a high-use area, to the park to the library to the part of Lamkin Street where the large developments are taking place in order to provide a safe path for a high density area. The grant application wasn't fully funded and that's why it is only going to the church. If it was fully funded it would go further down Lamkin Street in order to accommodate the developments taking place.

Mr. Mack illustrated his sidewalk designs in three sections.

1. The Town Offices to the Park Memorial:

There are three different proposed sidewalk designs from the Town Offices to the Park Memorial. The first design was represented by the color grey on Mr. Mack's PowerPoint. This line goes through the center of the park and is the original product of the 2007 corridor study. The intent of this sidewalk is to cut through all the picnic tables to increase the use. The next design was represented by the color red. This line is a straight path that follows the road. This is the traditional style of sidewalks. The last design was represented by the color blue. This design is the furthest from the road and serves the most direct path to Lamkin Street. The major differences between the three sidewalk designs is that the grey path bisects the park, the red path is set outside the telephone poles and the blue path has the most

impact on the trees within the park. The problem with the grey path bisecting the park is that when there is an event in the park the walking traffic might disrupt the event.

Mr. Mack asked if there were any questions or discussion topics so far.

Mr. Chevalier suggested that instead of going through the park with the sidewalks, since the park is something you can walk through, shouldn't the Town eliminate that part of the project right now and instead start at the beginning of Lamkin Street allowing the project to go further down the street. Mr. Mack responded to Mr. Chevalier's suggestion by saying sidewalks provide a good path, with an even surface, therefore people with limited mobility could utilize the area. Also if it is wet it provides people with better walking conditions. It was identified as a place where people travel most often since there are picnic tables in the park and several events taking place there.

Mr. Reynolds then asked Mr. Mack if the sidewalks, through the park, would be lighted. Mr. Mack said no, none of the proposed sidewalks that he is presenting include lighting options. At this point the budget of the project is minimal and the addition of lighting would increase the cost. With that said, lighting could be added at any time if the Town was capable of funding it. The estimated cost of lighting would be an additional \$10,000.

Next Mr. Cadieux asked if there would be parking at the municipal complex so that someone could park and then use the sidewalks in the park. For example if someone wanted to drive to the Town offices with their kids and then use the sidewalks to walk through the park.

Mrs. Britch-Valenta responded with the parking lot at the Town Office could certainly be utilized to get to the park. Right now it is utilized by the people attending events in the park therefore it is open to several uses. In phase two of the sidewalk project, the park and ride across the street would be linked to the Town Offices and therefore could be utilized as parking also. Mr. Mack added that he is looking into different areas to increase parking. One of those options is the space across from the library, next to the memorial.

Mr. Mack then asked the public and the Board their opinion on the sidewalks presented so far.

Mr. Chevalier said he would like to see one of the straight and direct sidewalks used because the park isn't big to begin with so this would be more practical and allow more use of the area. When looking at other Town's sidewalks you can see the sidewalks on the side of the road which represents some sort of civilization.

Mr. Mack agrees with this statement as the other options tend to bisect the park, decreasing the space available for open use.

Mr. Cadieux suggested that sidewalks closest to the Town Offices should follow along Route 78 allowing the sidewalks to continue towards the park and ride in the future. Mr. Mack expanded on that and said that was what he was thinking for the design of the red path. And although crosswalks on Route 78 aren't part of this project there will be plans to install one when the Town moves forward with the project.

2. The Park Memorial to Lamkin Street:

The next segment of phase one is from the Memorial in between the park and the library to the beginning of Lamkin Street.

The red path continues to follow the road to the gas station and then turns down past the library. The gray path could continue like the red path, following the road to the gas station and then turning down past the library, or could also follow down along the park edge and cross over at the beginning of Lamkin Street. The orange continuation from the red and grey paths is meant to serve the bus stop. The yellow continuation across the street from the orange continuation serves the library but as a consequence blocks the library parking.

At this stage the proposal for this section of the sidewalk doesn't have any traffic pattern changes from and to the gas station and library. But Mr. Mack has looked at potential crosswalk locations. While constructing his proposal he looked at how many times a person is going to cross the road and where in order to funnel them to a central location with less traffic. His suggestion was to have pedestrians cross from the Memorial Park to the library and then use the yellow continuation sidewalk. The only difficulty with that would be obstruction of the library parking. The crosswalk succeeding the grey path is not the ideal due to the step grades and tight cross slope.

Then Mr. Mack indirectly asked the Board and the Public if they had preference on whether they would like to see pedestrians walk in front of the memorial in order to view it as they pass by or walk behind the memorial.

Mr. Rainville asked Mr. Mack if there had been any consideration about closing off the section of the road in front of the library in order to make it all parking. Mr. Mack responded to his question with, yes he has considered it but has not brought it forth for discussion. He considered closing off the road completely and

making a hammerhead parking area but he also had to consider that the bus stop is located in that area and the gas station has frequent truck deliveries that require plenty of room to maneuver in and out of the gas pump area.

As a suggestion, Mr. Chevalier asked why the Town hasn't considered closing the road on the opposite side because there isn't enough traffic traveling through that intersection to need both roads leading to Lamkin Street. Mr. Mack said that the Town wouldn't want to funnel all its traffic in front of the library which would cause congestion and along with that big truck would have to use the road in front of the library making it a less child-friendly location.

Mr. Cadieux proposed that the Town should possibly make the road in front of the library, a one-way. Mr. Mack has considered a partial closure for this area, in both directions. But the reason he didn't follow through with the idea is because the traffic going south bound would be approaching the intersection on the wrong side of the road. Mr. Mack would prefer to see a narrower street to slow down traffic and prevent big truck traffic.

Mrs. Britch-Valenta suggested leaving the road open to only south bound traffic and installing parking on the opposite side of the library.

Mrs. Britch-Valenta then added that the Town of Highgate is currently trying to relocate the transit stop to the park and ride across from the Town Offices.

Connecting with Mrs. Britch-Valenta suggestion, Mr. Reynolds recommended angled parking on the one-way street.

Mr. Rainville also suggested putting a speed bump in on both ends of the road in order to see less traffic on that road and slower traffic.

Mr. Reynolds then asked if some of the asphalt in front of the library would eliminate. Mr. Mack said he was looking at ways to reduce the asphalt but wasn't sure exactly what area he would reduce. Mr. Mack would recommend considering the traffic flow when thinking of asphalt reduction.

3. Lamkin Street to the St. Louis Church:

The last segment of phase one is from the beginning of Lamkin Street to the St. Louis Church.

Mr. Mack would like to see the sidewalk on the North side of Lamkin Street but is presenting the details of both the South and North side sidewalk. The North sidewalk is represented by the color blue and the South sidewalk is represented by the color grey. If the Town chose to use the North sidewalk, a crosswalk would have to be installed in order to connect to the St. Louis Church. On either side Mr. Mack would like to see some sort of green strip or curbing in order to separate the sidewalk from the road and allow for better pedestrian safety.

When talking about where he would like to locate the crosswalk, Mr. Mack said that he would prefer to cross at the beginning of Lamkin Street bringing you to the South sidewalk. When using the South sidewalk the Town must consider existing landscaping, placement of trees and electrical poles. The Town's right-of-way between the Lamkin Street properties and the road is fairly narrow making it hard to place the sidewalk without interfering with landowners' existing landscaping. For example there are four trees that are in the route of the gray path.

Mr. Martin added that another complication would be the direction of the snow plowing, All the snow ends up in front of where the blue sidewalk is proposed. And to add to that, there are underground electricity units from the pole that crosses over the blue path. Mr. Mack said that there are no restrictive guidelines that state the sidewalks need to be plowed in the winter. But he understands how maybe changing the direction of road plowing should be considered. Mrs. Chevalier included that during the winter is the time she would need the sidewalks the most. It would allow her to travel on a level and clean surface.

With a change in discussion, Mr. Chevalier brought up a pass conversation on future developments having to personally install sidewalks instead of the Town doing it and the question came up on who would have insurance on the sidewalks. Mr. Mack clarified that there is a no-fault clause stating that living in Vermont you are expected to have hazardous conditions and the Town or the adjacent land owners are not responsible for the conditions of the sidewalks.

Mr. Reynolds then asked if the Town does maintain the sidewalks do they become liable. Mrs. Britch-Valenta said when the town looked into it the idea was that it was not putting any greater risk than you would in any other area, per say having a park or parking lot. There isn't a mandatory need to keep the sidewalks spotless and the risk doesn't change regardless of the amount of upkeep.

Then Mr. Rainville asked Mr. Mack why there is a green strip between the sidewalk and the road, is there any special reason for that strip of grass? Mr. Mack answered his question by stating he is trying to maintain consistency with

the outcome of the 2007 study. When you start using curbing instead of a green strip the Town would run into issues of runoff and drainage.

Mr. Reynolds asked if there was any discussion on whether to make Decatar Street onto Lamkin Street a one-way road. Mr. Mack doesn't believe he could consider one-way streets in that area at this point due to so many implications that are involved with one-way streets; for example bus routes, mail routes, and emergency vehicle routes.

Mr. Martin asked if in the proposal has there been consideration of repositioning the electrical poles or possibly burying the electrical lines. Responding to that, Mr. Mack said it would be an expensive consideration. If the poles are in the Town's right-of-way then they can be moved for free but using underground power becomes very expensive and way beyond this project's budget.

As a wrap up Mr. Mack summarized a couple points that he heard from the Board and the public. When thinking about children using the sidewalks the general consensus is a preference of some sort of green separating the road and the walking path and positioned on the south side due to less road crossing.

To end the sidewalk presentation Mr. Mack explained his expected timeline for this project. By the end of January he would like to see a decision from the Board and the Town. He would like to submit engineering documents for the agency review by the end of February. Then move on to applying for permits once the agency approves the conceptual plans. This would allow the Town to move forward with a right-of-way phase.

III. DELIBERATIVE SESSION

MOTION: Mr. Trombley motioned to approve the minutes with corrections. Mr. Rouse seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously at 7:43pm.

MOTION: Mr. Trombley motioned to go into executive session. Mrs. Decarreau seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously at 7:45pm.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Mr. Rouse motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Trombley seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously at 8:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Samantha Rice, Planning & Zoning Clerk

Minutes approved by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Cadieux". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D".

David Cadieux, Planning Commission Chair

Date: 3-18-14