

Downtown Improvement Project  
Meeting: Tuesday, May 25, 2021

Chairperson Steve Carhart called the meeting to order at 8:33 am.

In attendance were members Steve Carhart, Gar Morse, Linda Crosby, Gordon Brewster, Ben Rossi, and Kurt Svetaka. Also present were Nate Desrosiers, DPW, Chris Olney of the Planning Board, and Sue Brown, Town Planner

Minutes for April 20<sup>th</sup> meeting were approved.

Steve expressed regret that Ben will be leaving us. We need to know who will continue on the Committee for the upcoming year. Everyone in attendance agreed. Ben said he could stay for the summer. Steve will check with Carly. Gordon will carry forward with the planning function he has begun. We will need to draw on Ben's long history with us. It would help to identify other potential members. Gar said he could get in touch with Allan Houle who said once he could add additional staff at his store, he would be open to coming on board.

Sue Brown shared that there are two initiatives focused on downtown recovery. There is a public forum on the Rapid Recovery initiative tonight at 7:00 pm; an overview will be presented and then attendees will break into rooms for Essex and Manchester. The facilitators hope to get solid ideas for the plan – and then look for funding sources.

Cape Ann Chamber received a \$180,000 grant for four communities – all businesses. They will be hiring a marketing firm and will have a Cape Ann marketing proposal and will provide technical assistance to create an online market for any business – rollout will be soon.

Steve hopes that some of us can attend the Manchester section of Chamber's quarterly meeting in June.

Gars indicated that his priority is to establish public restroom facilities this summer. Bion has a plan for a public building that would include restrooms, but that will take a while to execute. Linda and I wondered if there would be any place at Harbor Point that could be created. Sue added that we could ask all merchants if they could offer facilities...also similar to Boston outside options. Steve suggested we consider porta potties that don't look like them to be placed in Reed Park. Kurt said he has seen nice ones at weddings. Ben thinks a trailer such as the one at Utopia could be a good possibility.

Nate indicated that the walkway between the parking area behind Town Hall to town will be completed mid-summer. We should let merchants know. Nate said survey came back but no contact with DPW.... quite a bit of work involved...landscaping, fence work, etc. Steve thinks this will be good for morale.

Linda said she and Gar have proposed that a small group work together to come up with additional ways to help local businesses, aside from but in conjunction with the Rapid Recovery work. The first meeting will be in Town Hall this Thursday at 1:00 pm. In attendance will be

Linda, Gar, Sue Brown, Sonja Nathans, Erika Brown and Amy Lage. We will share our ideas at our next meeting and welcome input from all here today.

Sue added that on Rapid Recovery website there are a lot of ongoing webinars...they offer good ideas especially about the walkway. They are recorded. The ideas could enhance the walkway but are not necessary as part of the initial installation.

Gar indicated that our informal, face to face talks with merchants can give us valid ideas, a repetition of requests and a confluence of ideas that will be helpful. He thinks that there is very little about the history of our town.... the walkway may be a place to focus that on a series of boards that can introduce our rich heritage. We should talk to Sue Parker from the Historical Museum.

Kurt suggested a restroom in the parking behind Town Hall...possibly trailers that can be rented.

Nate – DOT notified the Town of the repaving of Bridge Street and temporary repair of bridge just a week and a half ago. The Town will pay for it to extend from Ashland to Pine Street. Town green has been finished – fountain is now working - recycling the water. The Wastewater plant and replacing old water pumps are next. The upcoming work at Tuck's Point is out to bid. We have secured bids on materials to lock in costs...in particular the cost of steel would have risen. J and L doing walkway. Gates on Stinky beach will be replaced. HVAC system at Town Hall has been completed – more efficient – small energy improvements. Next drainage projects being looked at – after next year's budget is in place. We hope to start in the fall. Plan to detour Tappan's drainage... two phase project...out from under that building.

Wastewater treatment plant study is coming to an end. If we can't deal with existing flows, we shouldn't accept another community's flows. Cheapest alternative is a connection with Beverly – a few different connection possibilities...29 million estimate. If we went directly to SESD -over the bridge – 42 million and another under the bay 41 million. The last into Gloucester – they are being pushed to do a secondary treatment plant – a connection there would be 30 million. Advantageous for Manchester to work with Gloucester. Steve asked if there is an executive summary that could be shared – Nate – will pass it along in next few weeks.

Ben commended Nate and Chuck on their work on these projects. However, he stressed that on town waste water you need to really stay on it – ours is now out of date. Our town needs to keep on looking in every direction. Sometimes the cheapest immediate plan isn't the best long term. He talked to Brad Hill a few years ago – thought Complete Streets should include granite curbs and better sidewalks. He is disappointed in today's work. Also, grass seeding – crappy edge along the sidewalks on the Town green. He is disappointed sidewalks aren't done.

Gar – appreciates research DPW has done on wastewater. The current land where it now is would be worth multiple millions. There may be a bank of value that the town could use to execute a long-range plan for wastewater treatment plant – maybe move to an inland site. We shouldn't let the high cost discourage us from addressing the big problems future generations will address.

Nate said biggest hurdle is find someone outside of town that will accept our flow. May need an act of congress. What we will pay for sewer rates will be higher. Ben – how about putting it inland and use our pumping system – treat our wastewater ourselves. Where we are we don't have enough land. Nate – we did look at that option up in the LCD – a lot of bedrock in town. Hard to find a site that can accept that amount of filtration. Steve suggested that we have a longer discussion after we get the summary.

Steve talked to Brad Hill – we will get two chunks of \$750,000 as part of recovery act. There is another unallocated chunk of money. We need to ask for more support. Gordon has offered to work up a plan. We should have a presentation to the Selectmen. Senator Tarr's office said they might be able to give us some money. Also, there is the Green Future Act designed to support infrastructure. Nate and Sue Brown sent out plans – do we have all we need? We have applied for grants for Sawmill Brook project – looking to go out to bid next spring before we start – many environmental groups and state departments want to have input. Central St. culvert work is our priority – there will be a complete shut down for up to six months.

Steve clarified that the physical infrastructure is the responsibility of the DPW. The DIP is seen as leaders of the above curb line arena. Our immediate task: sidewalks, curbing, lighting all need funding. The esthetics should be consistent with the DPW work.

Ben – we want to get to Central St. Dam and all the way up Pine Street – try to widen the culvert in the northerly section in order to widen sidewalk. All issues can be dealt with – a real challenge.

Gordon said let's work toward providing a description of extending the project up Pine Street that could be ten slides – to show Selectmen and Senator Carr. Look for funding: one more big effort at the state and federal levels. We have to get in our pitch.

Nate added that the state will do work on Bridge and Harbor street intersection. It will take the shape of a T rather than a Y. A discussion followed re safety of new design. Nate will take another look at the plans.

Next meeting will be at 8:30 am on June 15<sup>th</sup>.

Motion to adjourn at 9:50 am.

Thanks to everyone!

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Carhart and Linda Crosby