

Downtown Improvement Project
Meeting: Tuesday, June 25, 2021

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

In attendance were members Steve Carhart, Gar Morse, Linda Crosby, Gordon Brewster, Ben Rossi, Carley Cook, and Kurt Svetaka. Also present were Nate Desrosiers, DPW, Sue Brown, Town Planner and Erika Brown, The Manchester Cricket.

Minutes for the May 25th meeting were approved.

Organizational matters: There was discussion of membership transition. Ben will stay as long as he remains in town – very valuable as he overlaps with Gordon. Steve and Gar will reconnect with Adam Houle to discuss his joining at some point. They will meet at the hardware store at 10:00 today. Most of our time today Steve wants to devote to small business endeavors and Phase 2.

Nate: we are finalizing the wastewater treatment plant – all final documents will be sent to grant makers by the end of the month. We also will be repairing seawalls that were damaged this year. DOT will repair the bridge on Harbor Street; the road will be shut down two days Monday and Tuesday next week – fixed temporarily and back in two years for a full rebuild. Boardman Ave. will be an alternate route to Tuck's Point. Otherwise business as usual. The sidewalk just past the post office will be done later this week. Will pass along report on wastewater soon. Some highlights: initial talks with DPW director in Gloucester; they will be going to a secondary plant within next 5 years – a significant project. Early designs are being done now. They will have to go through a full design and permitting – on Essex Street - multiyear construction. They may go over to Magnolia to bring in more revenue. We could then possibly connect there. It would require a lot of work – a pump station on current wastewater site. He was asked what an in-town option would look like – 40R location or another location...would need large piece of land (6 acres) ...large septic field or pipe down to our existing system.

Gar: Linda has done a great job. She and I focused on a brief survey...a short-term addressing of needs recited by merchants. Four items from the broad response: local businesses need to attract constituencies from out of town....1. public restrooms...Gar made a strong pitch to Cape Ann Chamber...talked about Town Hall and Community Center as possible locations – neither are on board. Owner of Bravo said she would dedicate two parking spaces for a porta potty and would arrange for it. Great start but not a long-term solution. 2nd need is parking. We don't think we give it adequate consideration. We lost a few spaces in our recent changes downtown. Proposed walk through – could we get it open even before it is complete. We need a parking management system. Workers in Town Hall should park behind VFW. There is a lack of signage downtown re bathrooms and parking – need a professional approach. 4th need – our sidewalks are not consistently passable. We would like concrete sidewalks and granite curbs. "Linda and I took a walk and marked the areas of concern. The other general thought is we need to have people who are responsible for each of these issues...'I am in charge of sidewalks,'etc. "

Linda agreed and reinforced the need for action as soon as possible to benefit the merchants and townspeople this summer. She added a concern about the lack of handicapped parking. There is only one space at the Post Office and one across from Captain Dusty's. Though two were put behind the Congregational Church, neither is visible to the public. She and Gar will follow up with the small group that was formed to increase communication between the business community and appropriate town employees and governing groups.

Sue – reported that the grant awarded to the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce will be working on ways to increase social media presence – to enable merchants to become more visible to the community.

There was a consensus that the DIP recommend to the Selectmen to put a porta potty in Reed Park. Nice bathrooms are possibly available. Gar moves that we ask the Selectmen to place high quality porta potties in select areas. Nate said we may need power and water...and should they be ADA accessible. Any location in Reed Park will have difficult accessibility. Steve- we are making progress with short term goals to help merchants...

Gar – we are trying to keep the next retailer from going out of business. Hands on help issues. Ben suggested a second unit by Town Hall.

Steve – let's get one in place asap and then work on Town Hall.

Motion passed.

Steve will contact Greg about this motion and ask for timing and report back to this group.

Next thing = phase 2. Steve had a good meeting with Chuck and Nate yesterday. Ben will report then Gordon will take over.

Ben: To bring Gordon up to speed. Goal is to complete total downtown improvement plan. Since we have done a small portion with phase I we do have some specifications that we can move forward with. Need a comprehensive plan for the whole area – to get bidding to finish it in pieces. We need a proposed plan and then estimated costs of parts of it – then designs. First thing is to get a conceptual plan of whole project and get town's people to review and approve. Gordon – Ben unloaded all of his documents and plans from way back and developed more questions. Define Phase 2 more clearly. End result - Chuck and Nate will talk to the local civil engineer to do an evaluation and create a road map. We need to start at the concept level through a public process which is imperative. He thinks they should make our goals part of it. Points missing – so many components have to overlay appropriately. Concept design should happen now. He is feeling very positive.

Steve – on the public side the good will Gar and Linda are creating will help. How do we pay for this – covid relief funds town received are 1.5 million dollars – hopeful VHB proposal should be shorter money that could come out of this. 5 billion in state coffers for rescue plan – two troughs - legislature and governor are claiming authority. He is touch with Senator Tarr who is ready to be helpful. There may be 10 million available. There is a further discussion on the

national level – whoever has projects ready would be in good position. We need to get our planning ducks in a row looking at a 1 – 3-year time horizon.

We all need to report to Greg and Eli.

We have short- and long-term projects – getting interest from all levels of our government. Very timely.

Gar – if we hire consultants there has to be a clear link to our community. Gordon is willing to be that contact.

Steve – we need to continue to get input from local businesses.

There was no new business.

Date for next meeting: July 20th at 8:30.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:38 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Carhart and Linda Crosby