

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF MEETING
January 14, 2014**

BOARD OF TRUSTEES: George Tyler (Village President); Elaine Sopchak, Andrew Brown, Lori Houghton. (Dan Kerin was absent.)
ADMINISTRATION: Patrick Scheidel, Village Manager; Lauren Morrisseau, Co-Assistant Manager & Finance Director; Susan McNamara-Hill, Co-Assistant Manager & Village Clerk/Treasurer/HR Director; Robin Pierce, Development Director.
OTHERS PRESENT: Diane Clemens, Nick Meyer, Karen Alderman, John Terborgh, Evan Detrick, Lois Blaisdell.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION by Elaine Sopchak, SECOND by Andrew Brown, to go into Executive Session to conduct interviews for the Tree Advisory Committee. VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.

Executive Session convened at 6 PM.

MOTION by Elaine Sopchak, SECOND by Andrew Brown, to adjourn Executive Session. VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.

Executive Session adjourned at 6:29 PM.

I. CALL TO ORDER and PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Village President, George Tyler, called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM and led the assemblage in the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

Add:

- Information from Robin Pierce regarding application for a bike/ped award from Regional Planning. Staff submitted the application.
- Executive Session to discuss evaluation of public officials.

III. GUESTS AND PRESENTATION

1. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda
None.

2. Presentation: Crescent Connector Environmental Assessment
Evan Detrick with Dubois & King explained the environmental assessment requirements for the crescent connector road. The document is available in the village office and comments will be accepted until January 23, 2014. The environmental assessment essentially looks at resources in the project area and impact to resources under a "build" alternative. Agencies including federal highway, VTrans, the village, and Regional

Planning have reviewed the assessment. Comments are appended to the document. It is anticipated there will be a finding of no significant impacts under the NEPA definition. The following was reviewed/noted:

- Layout of the crescent connector roadway.
- Cross section of the road.
- Travel lanes, sidewalk, bike lane.
- Traffic signal at Maple Street and traffic signal at Park Street.
- There are no significant impacts on farmlands, floodplain, surface water, ground water sources, wetlands, or archeological items, disadvantaged populations, infrastructure or aesthetics.
- The road will have a positive impact on traffic, traffic congestions and flow, land use (opens some parcels to further development), air quality, hazardous materials (those found will be removed), socio-economic factor (pedestrian facility added).
- Some private property will be taken for road right-of-way.
- Lincoln Hall may be eligible for noise abatement. Noise levels will decrease with the project. There are two noise criteria per VTrans: an increase in noise level or noise approaching the threshold. Lincoln Hall is public meeting space so a residential level of noise applies. Noise at Lincoln Hall approaches the noise level that allows abatement. With the traffic change through Five Corners noise levels will go down. Abatement could be a sound wall along the road side of the Lincoln Hall building.
- There will be temporary construction impacts with disruption of soils and traffic.
- The road meets the purpose and need as stated in the scope of work and will not result in significant impacts under the definition through NEPA.
- Once a finding of no impact is received the project can advance through the VTrans process to construction in late 2015.
- The railroad is doing some work. The rail plans must be received to be able to move forward with the railroad crossing on the road.
- No comments were received at the public meeting on the project. One comment was received by mail questioning how traffic can improve with the addition of two traffic signals. The response is that traffic will flow more efficiently overall so traffic will improve.

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS

A woman in the audience asked about turning onto the crescent connector from Five Corners and impact on the parking on Park Street. Mr. Detrick explained the turning movement onto the road from Park Street in both directions and the relocation of parking to along the crescent connector or a lot off the roadway. The number of spaces to be removed is approximately six (though there are about 30 spaces by the Hungry Dutchman) and the handicap accessible space will be farther away from the building unless the property owner finds a different location closer to the building.

There was mention of the potential for more traffic from the proposed mixed use development at Five Corners. Robin Pierce said when the road was designed initially there was no knowledge of development at Five Corners. There is time to make changes because the design development phase has not yet been done.

John Terborgh urged considering closing the section of Main Street by Martone's Market and converting the space into a walking public space much like Church Street in Burlington. The wait at Five Corners would be decreased because there would no longer for a five point intersection. Business owners could be involved in the plan to determine what would work for them with regard to parking and store access.

A business owner on Park Street asked about the duration of construction and if there is any compensation or protection for businesses impacted by the construction. Mr. Detrick said construction will be targeted to be the better part of the construction season, mid-April to November. Unless a business is directly impacted there is no compensation.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

1. Appointments to Tree Advisory Committee

MOTION by Lori Houghton, SECOND by Andrew Brown, to appoint the following individuals to the Tree Advisory Committee:

- **Paula DeMichele**
- **Rich Boyers**
- **Nick Meyer**
- **Warren Spinner**

VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.

There was discussion of amending the committee policy to allow five members. Staff will prepare language for the next meeting.

2. Approve Amendment to Agreement with School District

MOTION by Lori Houghton, SECOND by Elaine Sopchak, to accept the amended agreement with the school district to hold a joint meeting once a year rather than twice a year. VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.

3. FY15 Proposed Budget

Staff reviewed changes to the FY15 proposed budget noting the following:

- Money was added (\$921) for new rugs in Lincoln Hall to protect the new flooring.
- Public Works employee has gardening experience and will fill the gardening position for the village which will save money.
- The library replaced an employee with in-fill of a part-time employee which will save \$2,400.
- Health insurance costs are reflected in the budget.
- The General Fund increased from 3.6% to 3.71%
- The top five priority capital projects have an estimated cost of \$4.945 million versus reducing the Main Street project scenario to just the sidewalk and drainage (\$3.693 million) or drainage only (\$3.1 million) versus excluding Main Street (\$2.234 million).

George Tyler mentioned researching any grant money available for the sidewalk portion of the Main Street project. There was discussion of bonding for the project and postponing some of the work. Andrew Brown explained a bond vote can be done for the total bond amount for all five projects, but the village can expend only the amount needed for a project or portion of a project. The state is going to pave Main Street at some point (the road was scheduled to be paved in 2009-2010, but did not get done). The goal is for the village to do the drainage work and then the state to pave the road. Lauren Morrisseau noted securing approval from the voters for a bond for the five priority projects will allow more projects to be done sooner. The top five priority projects have been removed from the capital project list. If the bond is not approved then the projects must be reinserted into the list which will bump down other projects. The cost of the bond will be added to the tax rate over 20 years. Bond interest rates have increased slightly since October (3.742% to 3.672%). The annual contribution to the capital fund for capital projects will continue, but doing the annual contribution and asking for periodic bonds is not sustainable (better to secure one large bond at once). Andrew Brown noted the capital committee discussed working with Regional Planning to do a street inventory so the village can better plan the appropriate capital contribution to meet needs.

Pat Scheidel commented on the degrading infrastructure in many states, not just Vermont, and the lack of federal and state funding that is available. Mr. Scheidel advised to position for success project plans should be ready to go so grants can be pursued when available. The capital committee will be invited to a meeting with the Trustees to discuss bonding for projects. Staff will provide information on cost in time and resources to repair Main Street each year.

Lauren Morrisseau reported one fifth of the bond payment for the treatment plant was added to the sanitation rate to avoid a large rate increase at once and a significant amount has been accrued to date so staff is recommending the amount collected for payment be decreased. The Trustees concurred.

4. Whitcomb Farm Tax Stabilization Agreement

Minor changes to the agreement are relative to excluding the solar farm acreage. The three year term with six year extension continues with the agreement.

MOTION by Elaine Sopchak, SECOND by Andrew Brown, to approve and execute the renewed Tax Stabilization Agreement with the Whitcomb Family, LLC.

VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.

V. NEW BUSINESS

1. Approve Request to Evaluate Speed Limit on Lincoln Street

There was discussion of the request to decrease the speed limit to 25 mph on the section of Lincoln Street by the cemetery where lighting and pedestrian improvements were recently installed. Staff will investigate posting village streets at 25 mph up to West Street Extension and make a recommendation.

MOTION by Lori Houghton, SECOND by Andrew Brown, to authorize staff to write a letter to Amy Gamble, staff coordinator for VTrans Traffic Committee, requesting evaluation of the speed limit on a section of Lincoln Street by the cemetery where recent pedestrian and lighting improvements were installed. VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.

2. Discuss 2014 Legislative Priorities

The following items were listed:

- Water quality
- Adequate funding for paving roads
- Massage therapist licensure
- Single payer health care and impact on municipalities (Finance Director calculates 3.5% of health care costs are attributable to Obama Care alone)
- Municipalities in the home card system (Department of Libraries should investigate a statewide courier service for libraries)

State representatives will be invited to attend the next meeting to discuss the legislative priorities list.

3. Discuss/Approve 2013 Annual Report Cover and Dedication

MOTION by George Tyler, SECOND by Lori Houghton, to amend the dedication of the annual report to include all volunteer groups in the village.

DISCUSSION: There was mention of groups that are not on the list in the resolution. It was clarified the resolution is noting results, not specific groups. VOTING: prior to the vote the George Tyler withdrew the motion.

Lori Houghton proposed a motion to include Heart & Soul in the list due to the multitudes of people touched by the group. The motion did not have a second. There was discussion of wording to include volunteers, both past and present, including but not limited to Heart & Soul and others. It was suggested a page be added to the annual report listing the six Heart & Soul values.

MOTION by Lori Houghton, SECOND by Elaine Sopchak, to approve the picture of the Brownell Library and the dedication to volunteers for the annual report as presented. VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.

MOTION by Elaine Sopchak, SECOND by Lori Houghton, to include on a separate page of the annual report reproduction of the Heart & Soul poster describing the six values identified by the Heart & Soul committees. VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.

VI. VILLAGE MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Meeting Schedule

- January 28, 2014 @ 6:30 – Regular Trustees Meeting
- February 11, 2014 @ 6:30 – Regular Trustees Meeting
- February 25, 2014 @ 6:30 – Regular Trustees Meeting

- March 11, 2014 @ 6:30 – Regular Trustees Meeting
- March 25, 2014 @ 6:30 – Regular Trustees Meeting
- April 8, 2014 @ 6:30 – Regular Trustees Meeting
- April 22, 2014 @ 6:30 – Regular Trustees Meeting

Special Meetings/Events:

- April 2, 2014 @ 6 PM – Community Supper before Annual Meeting
- April 8, 2014 7 AM – 7 PM – Australian ballot voting

2. Heart & Soul Presentation

The report from Heart & Soul will be presented on February 10, 2014 at the high school. Proposals for the future will be discussed.

3. Bond Vote

The warning for a bond vote on April 8, 2014 must be adopted at least 30 days, but not more than 40 days prior. The Trustees will decide on the bond vote at the next meeting.

VII. TRUSTEES COMMENTS/CONCERNS & READING FILE

- Elaine Sopchak reported the 6th Grade class from Lawton School will participate in the annual meeting as part of a citizenship project. The students may team with 2nd graders at Hiawatha School on a “my future village” exercise. Sue McCormack and Heart & Soul have been alerted to these events. The Trustees may be asked to speak to the class.
- George Tyler suggested links on the webpage be discussed at the next meeting.
- Elaine Sopchak mentioned the comprehensive plan that is being updated is not on the website.
- Reading file:
 - Minutes of Planning Commission (12/5/13 & 12/19/13)
 - Minutes of Capital Program Review Committee (13/3/13)
 - Letter of Congratulations to James Jutras for 2013 Regional EPA Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator Excellence Award
 - Memo re: Champlain Water District FY15 Budget
 - VLCT 2014 Municipal Policy Priorities
 - VLCT Town Meeting Tune-Up Workshop 2/11/14
 - Article in *Business People-Vermont* re: IBM

VIII. CONSENT AGENDA & READING FILE

MOTION by Lori Houghton, SECOND by Elaine Sopchak, to approve the consent agenda as presented:

1. Approve Minutes of Previous Meetings (12/9/13 & 12/10/13)
2. Approve Warrants including check #10048392 through #10048497 totaling \$1,140,910.20.
3. Approve Warrants including check #10048499 through #10048602 totaling \$331,040.12.

VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.

IX. DISCUSSION: Village Downtown Redevelopment Strategy

MOTION by George Tyler, SECOND by Lori Houghton, to take a five minute break before resuming the meeting to discuss strategy for redevelopment of the village downtown. VOTING: unanimous (3-0)[Andrew Brown not present for vote]; motion carried.

The following was discussed:

- The downtown area is bordered by the railroad tracks and includes Five Corners, the crescent connector, properties at Five Corners with a proposed mixed use development (Milot lot) and a change of use on another property at the intersection.
- A master plan for trees in the village should be done by the Tree Advisory Committee.
- Committees, strategies, resources must be in place for thoughtful growth to happen in the village. The village has a comprehensive plan, but a strategy is needed because there is latitude in the plan so a developer may not build what the village is anticipating. A partnership should be formed with developers so the proposed development is viable for the developer and a meaningful building for the village.
- There should be conversation with property owners/developers about their properties and potential plans for development.
- A master plan could be done for a certain area of the village in concert with developers. A consultant could be hired to do the downtown master plan. Essex Town is proposing to hire a consultant as part of the review for the town plan. The voters must approve money for the consultant. There could be opportunity to collaborate with the town provided there is focus on the village and town centers. This would meet the Heart & Soul value of more collaboration.
- The village needs a downtown master plan now. The town may not be on the same schedule. Competition with the town should be avoided. It may be possible to do the plan in collaboration with the town, but not in tandem. It may be possible that the town plan could be integrated with the village master plan and handled by the same consultant.
- There are differences in that the town is developing and the village is redeveloping.
- Regarding funding, defining the strategy and scope of services will determine the cost.
- The results of the study should show different options, such as overlay districts, or different scenarios of development.
- Stakeholders should be involved in the discussion. The community overall should be involved. There can be multiple points of contact with groups for discussion of ideas throughout the master plan development.
- A charette can be done. Problems and goals can be identified and potential solutions discussed then a scope of work drafted and a consultant hired.
- Input could be solicited at annual meeting on what the villagers want the community to look like, on what is “thoughtful growth”.

- People need to be informed about what the comprehensive plan supports for development in the downtown area.
- Citizens and local businesses could have a roundtable discussion of the thoughtful growth value and flesh out ideas.

Pat Scheidel briefly described the process followed by Essex Town with the Lang Farm development. Problems, solutions and opportunities were identified to make the area more habitable for businesses and citizens alike. For the scope of services for the village master plan property owners, existing businesses, and developers should be brought into the planning process. The community must be included in the planning process. Incentives for developers to coordinate and cooperate with the plan should be determined. There should be discussion of how redevelopment and improving the local economy can occur without competing with other communities, and how the local economy can be restructured to complement what exists and potential new development. Changes to the code and in government structures (planning commission, zoning board, development review board, and such) should be discussed to make the master plan work. Regional plans and ideas and potential impact on the village should be researched.

Lori Houghton suggested a moratorium on building until the master plan vision is done so development does not occur that defeats the purpose of the master plan. The moratorium could dictate for the consultant the timeframe for completion of the master plan. George Tyler noted a defensible ordinance would have to be drafted and adopted to establish a moratorium which would require several months of time. Elaine Sopchak suggested some personal interaction with developers to see if they will discuss their plans and ask them to hold for a six month window until the vision process is complete. The vision should be in place before the crescent connector is built.

Staff will draft a timeline and cost estimate for the downtown master plan. George Tyler will draft some text on the scope of services.

X. EXECUTIVE SESSION and/or ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by George Tyler, SECOND by Elaine Sopchak, to adjourn the regular meeting and convene Executive Session to discuss personnel issues, and invite the Village Manager and HR Director to attend. VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned and Executive Session convened at 9:30 PM.

MOTION by Elaine Sopchak, SECOND by Lori Houghton, to adjourn Executive Session. VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.

Executive Session adjourned at 10 PM.

RScty: M.E.Riordan

