

**MINUTES OF THE CHESHIRE TOWN COUNCIL PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 5, 2016, AT 6:30 P.M. IN ROOM 210, TOWN HALL,
84 SOUTH MAIN STREET, CHESHIRE CT 06410**

Present

Paul Bowman, Chairman; Patti Flynn-Harris; Absent: Timothy Slocum.

Staff: Michael A. Milone, Town Manager; Gerald Sitko, Economic Development Coordinator; Walter Gancarz, Gown Engineer.

1. ROLL CALL

The clerk called the roll and a quorum was determined to be present.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The group Pledged Allegiance to the Flag.

Chairman Bowman moved agenda item #3 to the end of the agenda.

3. LAND ACQUISITION (EXECUTIVE SESSION)

Chairman Bowman moved this item to the end of the agenda.

4. CONSIDERATION TO REALLOCATE THE \$500,000 STEAP GRANT FOR THE WEST MAIN STREET SIDEWALK.

Mr. Sitko informed the Council members that OPM and DECD representatives have advised that these funds can be redirected for the West Main Street Sidewalk project. The grant is \$500,000; \$32,000 has been spent for engineering costs, and the total engineering costs will be about \$38,000 to \$40,000. There is another \$350,000 approved by the Council in the capital budget for this project. Total estimated project cost is \$710,000. At this time there has not been a meeting held with property owners, and he is uncertain of their feelings on the sidewalk project.

Mr. Milone reviewed the chronology of events for the project. He stated that Mr. Sitko was told that the State would extend the existing STEAP grant to December 2016. There are concerns about making the case to reallocate a grant, and justification for using it for something different. This will be a hard sell. Parking is an issue; there is opportunity for a second block grant; parking will not happen immediately; and Mr. Milone is concerned the Town will not be successful in reallocation of this grant by the State.

There is emphasis in the grant application about public safety and Mr. Sitko emphasized there is a need for sidewalks in this area of Town.

Mr. Bowman asked what is needed to get the project shovel ready, and if a meeting with property owners is in the plans.

In response, Mr. Gancarz said the plans are far along, but there are no specs to them. He can get the plans ready for bidding by late March or early April. We have reached

the point with enough detail, can schedule a meeting, and get feedback from property owners. People must be informed there will be a retaining wall in front of their homes, etc. Given authorization, a meeting can be public noticed, and held in January to get comments back from property owners. Two months would enable finalization of plans, specifications, get it out to bid, responses in April, and have six (6) months for the project which could be done in 2016.

It was noted by Mr. Sitko that Cheshire has a good relationship with DECD based on its performance with the streetscape project. The Town can request an extension for a work that is in progress.

Mr. Milone said this project could be displayed as a work in progress, near the finish line, and it is critical to integrate it with other things going on...and most of the \$500,000 will be spent by December. He stated the \$500,000 must be spent...not the \$850,000 which includes what the Town has allocated.

Ms. Flynn-Harris asked how far along we are, and if there is an alternate to be looked at for sidewalks in this area. She is uncertain about the impact on homeowners, whether they are excited about the project, and they may be asking for remuneration for taking their property. This would affect the bottom line of the cost estimate.

There would be 825 linear feet of retaining wall and Mr. Sitko said there must be a look at how this will be received.

It was recommended by Mr. Bowman that there be a meeting scheduled with property owners...people may be willing to go along with the project. If not, an alternative must be looked at and determine what can be done.

Regarding the estimates, Mr. Gancarz said there is a 20% contingency, and \$700,000 is a reasonable estimate.

If the worse happens, Mr. Milone said there is ability to complete part of the project, which is better than no sidewalk at all...going from Beachport to Maple Avenue.

Based on the budget calculations before the committee, Mr. Bowman said the numbers are good, and part of the project could be phased in for the sidewalks.

Ms. Flynn-Harris pointed out that the West Main Streetscape project wanted sidewalks to Beachport. There is no total cost yet, but we should take the pulse of the property owners.

There is funding of \$50,000 for landscaping and Mr. Gancarz said this should make homeowners happy, plus the 20% contingency. He believes there is room to work with the people.

Mr. Sitko said this is the 4th part of the West Main Street, Linear Trail and Ball & Socket strategy.

Ms. Flynn-Harris has no problem with going ahead with this project. We can get the feelings of the neighbors, and learn about any costs for taking their property.

MOTION by Ms. Flynn-Harris; seconded by Mr. Bowman.

MOVED that the Planning Committee requests that the engineering process go forward and there be a meeting with the West Main Street property owners for continuation of the West Main Street Sidewalks, and get confirmation of any additional costs for the project.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

5. AUTHORIZATION TO APPLY FOR AN ADDITIONAL STEAP GRANT.

Mr. Sitko informed the committee there is an opportunity to apply for another STEAP grant, with a January 15, 2016 application deadline. He has looked at things, and this additional grant will allow for parking near the Trail. At a webinar he attended there were questions about using money for property acquisition and parking area...and the answer was "yes". There are now 10 additional parking spaces on West Main Street for the Trail, but they will not be enough. Parking will affect the West Main Street business district and Trail parking. The grant money could be used for additional parking. Before the money is released the State must see that the Town has properties under contract.

There have been discussions between Mr. Sitko and Scott Bushee, DEEP Project Manager, looking into the additional parking. Mr. Sitko advised the State wants properties under control, demolition of buildings by Cheshire, and building of a parking lot.

Mr. Milone stated there are two properties under consideration, which will be discussed in executive session.

MOTION by Ms. Flynn-Harris; seconded by Mr. Bowman.

MOVED that the Planning Committee approves authorization to apply for an additional STEAP grant up to \$500,000 for parking associated with the Linear Trail and associated pedestrian improvements.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

6. APPROVAL OF SUBORDINATION AGREEMENT FOR THE GRANGE PARKING LOT.

Mr. Sitko reviewed information from Frank Bartlett Jr. of Bartlett Burns, LLC, who purchased 36 Wallingford Road for relocation of his law office. Mr. Bartlett is active in

the community organizations. At the subject site there are 7 or 8 parking spaces available. The plan is to finish off the first floor for the Bartlett law firm, and convert the second floor for another law firm/real estate office. Under zoning regulations 8 more parking spaces are needed for PZC approvals.

Mr. Sitko noted that according to Town Planner Voelker, PZC will want to see a lease commitment...with option to renew every 5 years. At this time, things are waiting on approval of the sublease before going to PZC. The Grange area has 50 parking spaces, and Mr. Bartlett is requesting 8 of these spaces for his use.

The committee was informed by Mr. Milone that the Town does not use all 50 spaces at the Grange lot. Only 8 to 10 employees use the lot on a regular basis. If there are regional workshops or large meetings, the Grange lot has more cars parking because of the limited spaces in the Town Hall lot. When the Town Hall lot was closed for repaving staff used the Grange lot, and part time staff often use the lot.

Mr. Bowman said more information is needed from the Town Planner on the use of the building, and whether there will be one or two businesses in the subject building.

According to Mr. Sitko, the 2nd floor firm will require the additional 8 parking spaces.

The revenue numbers were run, and Mr. Milone reviewed them with the committee. Based on information on the Bartlett firm, there would be another \$200,000 investment in the property.

Mr. Sitko cited the current assessment of \$124,910; appraised value is \$178,436. The new owner, Mr. Bartlett, plans to make a \$200,000 to \$250,000 investment as the building needs work. If this is done, the assessed value increases to \$210,000; appraised value will be \$300,000; and the net gain in new taxes to the Town will be \$3,400 in personal property. This property is in a C-1 zone, and can only be used for a residential zone if the resident is associated with the property on the site.

The financial information was compiled by Murtha Cullina and was reviewed by Mr. Milone with the committee. Annual Sublease Rental - \$688,80; Annual Snow Plow Fees - \$286.00; and these were based on pro rated share of spaces and 12 estimated snow storms. The Town's lease with the Grange expires in April 2017, with notification of intent to renew by April 30, 2016, and Mr. Bartlett may want to make his lease co-terminus with the Town Hall parking space lease.

Stating that the property has the parking spaces, Mr. Bowman cited the fact that there are technical questions and precedent setting concerns about this sub-lease. Without approval of the extra spaces the building would be non-conforming. Mr. Bowman wants more information before the Council makes a decision on this matter.

Mr. Milone stated that the new property owner, Mr. Bartlett, would want to have information in the near future on this matter.

Mr. Sitko noted that Mr. Bartlett is waiting to go to PZC pending Council approval of the extra parking spaces.

More information will be asked of the Town Planner...what happens with a non-conforming use, associated costs, etc. and Mr. Milone will inform the Council.

3. LAND ACQUISITION (EXECUTIVE SESSION)

MOTION by Ms. Flynn-Harris; seconded by Mr. Bowman.

MOVED that the Planning Committee enter Executive Session at 7:00 p.m. to include Town Manager Milone, Town Engineer Gancarz, and EDC Coordinator Sitko.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

MOTION by Ms. Flynn-Harris; seconded by Mr. Bowman.

MOVED that the Planning Committee exit Executive Session at 7:16 p.m.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

7. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Ms. Flynn-Harris; seconded by Mr. Bowman.

MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 7:16 p.m.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Attest:

Marilyn W. Milton, Clerk