

February 20, 2013 EDSC Minutes

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EDSC Meeting 2.20.13

Present: Al Ahlers, Mark Girard, Sarah Green Hopkins, Bill Hopkins, Gwen Hilton, David Perkins, Andy Walsh, Katie Murphy. Pat Carroll of Carroll Associates came to present, and to meet the committee.

Al reports that he went to the Selectmen's Meeting last night and the Town Center proposal was approved. Paul Napolitano was not in favor; he wants the decision to be brought before the townspeople at Town Meeting.

There is enough money to cover the planning through to the Town Meeting.

Pat asked for introductions. He was introduced to Gwen, our consultant; Dave, former selectman, Andy, former selectman and member of the Safe Bikeways Committee, Katie, president of NYHS and member Events Committee, Al, many times volunteer; Mark, selectman, Sarah, retired city planner, and Bill, landscape architect and teacher.

Pat moved here in 1988 from Colorado, and he lives in Cape Elizabeth.

David explained that we could jump into the agenda beyond the overall project discussion because we had worked through a lot of points already. Placemaking through social, cultural, economic, and physical context briefly discussed. Synergy noted.

Mark spoke to the value of a fresh set of eyes.

Bill asked about the budget process. David said that quickly we'll have to find out how much lighting, sidewalks, signage, and landscaping will cost for the Budget Committee. Mark said that this is a one-line budget item but still, by April 1 we need to know how much this is all going to cost.

Sarah noted that the committee has checked in with many stakeholders in town and have gotten a thumbs up and that the Triangle should come first.

Katie reported that the NYHS will be announcing its desire to move the Old Town House to the Village Center, and therefore will ask if siting of this building can be worked into the Town Triangle plan. The committee's reaction was very positive.

Mark noted that no doubt our town budget will see a rise at town meeting. We need to bear in mind that we need to create economic activity as part of this. A value return on the dollar in tandem with visual improvement.

Discussion about money through the Feds and from the State, particularly regarding sidewalks.

Do we want to respect or reduce the footprint of the ballfield? Siting of Old Town House? Sensitivity of Veteran's Park woods? Can we carve into the Park if needed?

The Rec Comm. has some plans for improving the "ballfield" but it's important open land that should be improved.

Bill notes that we should avoid any civil engineering at this point (a road through) and get more "bang for our buck" by prudent landscaping, clearing, designating of path through but not establishing a road.

Mark and Katie spoke to the value of opening up the ravine. A natural road looping is available near the Sharp house. Mark talked about the bringing a trail down to the ravine and crossing the stream.

Mark and Dave talked about the Sharp house and possibly another structure that would be commercial building.

Lighting: Bill said it would be a simple technique of "bridging" from one road to another with lighting, following a pedestrian path. Leading the eye. An evening effect. And the town has very few street lights—15 or so in total!

Mark talked about lighting the inner area.

In parking areas, for public safety, the lights need to be stronger.

Mark reports that Board of Selectmen is thinking of an architectural study for Wescustogo Hall.

Sarah noted that when the town bought the sharp property there was a feeling that the “neighborhood” should continue to feel residential. The feeling has changed, although compatibility is important.

Sidewalks bring walkers, more activity. The more the better.

Emphasize the Ristich trail, which originates on the edge of Veterans Park and continues across Parsonage Road.

Andy notes that if sidewalks are too expensive, you could do a smaller version of the Triangle by bringing a sidewalk up from the 115/9 intersection to a pedestrian trail that could go across the lower triangle and join the sidewalk on Route 9, using the Town Office parking lot as part of the loop.

Andy notes that the easiest place to cross the gully is near the driveway for the daycare center on Route 115. A drop grade crossing here?

Pat noted that accessibility will be important.

David noted that the “no mans land” –the “point” of the triangle of 9/115. It needs landscaping.

Pat asked if there were a farmers market in town. The committee agreed that it would be a great way to bring in people for the market and to link Skyline.

Katie: the idea of a historic garden connected to the historical society as a focal point and a destination.

“Wayfinding”—signage. All agreed that this is part of the first step, very important.

The committee “selling” this, bring the noteworthy pieces to the public, will be the challenge and the opportunity. We need to establish momentum.

Andy: Remember: the idea behind this is to make the town a nicer place to bring business into. This is a reasonable way to improve the tax base.

Mark: we need to invest in the town.

Katie: NYHS invites the EDSC and Pat to the NYHS Annual Meeting on Monday, March 18 at North Yarmouth Congregational Church.

Al: the NY Business Association has invited the EDSC to their Friday, March 8, 5-7 PM Wescustogo Hall business showcase.

Next, we reviewed David's RFP for the School site. All are asked to review and comment by tomorrow afternoon.

Mark commented that he's concerned about the timing. There is uncertainty about the school closing and we won't know until Town Meeting if we can even go forward with the Town Center plan. He feels time would be better spent in information gathering for developers.

David said conversations need to get going. Mark agreed but felt the conversations should be more discreet, maybe in a workshop setting. He felt the timing isn't quite right. David agreed, but wondered what it would hurt to put this idea out there.

Mark said it's about momentum. And when things start getting more real you start getting a more real response. He feels we need to know what we're "selling."

Pat commented that there is a defined process for Maine Housing (Avesta). And in August or September is the deadline for application. Points given for need within the community AND for planning in place.

Andy recalled that David Bateman (developer) came to the committee two years ago. At the time he said we needed to come to him with our needs.

Discussion re: getting information / opinions out about the site and its future.

Bill suggested that sending out a letter of information to interested parties would be a proactive move. Mark said he would still like to hold off. He said that we don't have anything definitively in place yet.

Al said he got the sense from the Selectmen's meeting that there is some hesitation on the Board's part

about this and therefore we ought to heed this viewpoint.

RFP/Letter of Information tabled until next meeting.

Mark asked that the committee develop a lot of raw information/capacity/ constraints re: the Town Center site that will help with this planning—utilities, traffic counts, water, etc. Anything that would be helpful.