

**COMMUNITY PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING
JUNE 16, 2021, 6:02 P.M.
MINUTES**

1. Call to Order

A. Meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m. by Mayor Shari Cantor.

B. Attendees – Mayor Shari Cantor, Deputy Mayor Leon Davidoff, Councilor Lee Gold, Councilor Beth Kerrigan, Town Manager Matt Hart, Town Engineer Greg Sommer, Acting Community Planning and Economic Development Director Duane Martin, and Deputy Corporation Counsel Gina Varano.

2. Business Items

A. Meeting Minutes May 13, 2021 – The minutes were accepted without objection.

B. Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program – Mr. Hart reported the Town has had a Complete Streets Policy in effect for several years. There have been very successful traffic calming projects in various locations and the program is designed to tie it all together in a formal program. A draft of the manual was placed on BoardDocs.

Mr. Martin reported speeding has been an issue in many of the communities and it has been challenging to manage this issue over the years. Mr. Sommer will be presenting his research in finding a program that will work well in West Hartford regarding this issue.

Mr. Sommer did a brief overview of the proposed Neighborhood Street Traffic Calming Program, which was attached to the Agenda. The focus of the program is on the local streets. The speeding complaints have typically been answered by police enforcement or electronic speed signs. The program is designed for a better solution for more physical measures, which can be implemented on the street with a log of neighborhood involvement, to encourage safer travel speeds, modify driver behavior, lower the frequency and severity of crashes; overall safety to make the neighborhoods a little more desirable. Arterial and collector roadways are excluded from this program. These will be handled by a different approach. There is currently a much larger study requiring more time and effort regarding those roadways.

The traffic calming measures fall into three categories which are geared toward travel speed reduction, traffic volume reduction, and pedestrian/bicyclist safety improvements. A couple of measures within these three categories include traffic circles, speed humps, a median barrier, a right-in/right-out island, bike lanes/sharrows, and raised intersections. There are some restrictions to eligibility for the program including but not limited to state highways, direct emergency response routes, transit bus routes, roadway grades over 5%, and traffic volumes of less than 500 vehicles per day or more than 3000 vehicles per day. The process for requesting/evaluating traffic calming begins with reporting a traffic safety-related concern

to the Engineering Division. From there, the Engineering Division will review the eligibility for the program and then perform a needs assessment. The needs assessment has a 25-point scale based on travel speeds, traffic volumes, peak hour volume, crash history, presence of sidewalks, and proximity to pedestrian generators. Based on the combined score, one of three measures will be implemented. Streets receiving less than five points will be recommended for educational measures. Streets receiving a score of 10 or less will be recommended enforcement and/or educational measures. Those streets receiving a score of 11 points or more will be recommended for engineering, enforcement, and/or educational measures.

Once the needs assessment has been completed, a planning discussion will be undertaken to further define traffic-related concerns after which a petition will be submitted to the Engineering Division with the support of 75% of the residents. A meeting will be conducted with the neighborhood followed by a neighborhood survey. Based on the survey results, a plan will be developed and possibly implemented with a one-year follow-up to see if the measures implemented resolved the problem. Funding for the implementation and maintenance of the program will be allocated through the Capital Improvement Program budget or grant funding, if available.

C. Eversource Easement for Mountain Road at Albany Avenue Intersection Improvement Project – Ms. Varano provided a short review of this project. Part of the project is a relocation of a telephone pole and it needs to be relocated to the condominium association's property. We are facilitating the easement from the condominium association to Eversource. It will not necessarily require Town Council approval because the easement is not in favor of the municipality but it is part of a larger project, which is on Engineering's list.

Mr. Martin stated they are working through the final design process and the easement is a piece of that. It is anticipated this will be completed in the next few months. If everything works according to plan, construction would start in the spring of 2022.

D. Fern Street Bridge Easements – Ms. Varano provided an update on the Fern Street Bridge easements. This is a larger Engineering project. It requires the Town to obtain three easements over three properties, two are residential and the other is the American School for the Deaf. The easements will involve a temporary construction easement and a permanent easement. The temporary will be for the work itself and the permanent easement will be accessed over the properties for inspection, maintenance, repair, and replacement in the future. The expectation is the easements will be drafted and will be on the next Council agenda to receive and refer to TPZ. They are fairly standard construction easements.

E. Use of American Rescue Act Funds – Mr. Hart provided a brief overview of the American Rescue Act funds including the amount of money the Town is anticipating receiving; \$25M going directly to the Town, \$10M to the school district, and the Town will be receiving an additional \$12M as their share of county money. Connecticut is one of two states in the country that does not have a county government so entitlement communities of 50,000 or more people are receiving their county's share directly. The Council has allocated roughly \$4.9M of the funds for FY 2021 as well as the next budget year, FY 2022. There is a possibility that FY 2021 may not need as much of the \$1.5M that was earmarked for

FY2021, which would reserve more of those funds to be utilized for other purposes. The Treasury Department set up five major categories where the funds may be used: supporting public health response and government operations; replacing public sector revenue loss; address negative impacts to individual workers, business, and the public sector more broadly; strategic investments in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure including stormwater and drainage projects; and premium pay for essential workers. This is a time-limited revenue, which can only be used over a few years, so care needs to be taken to ensure there are no holes in the budget that create a structural deficit.

Staff had been requested to prepare proposals for Mr. Hart's consideration and were due earlier this week. Mr. Hart is reviewing them now and a package will be prepared of Staff proposals for the Council to consider for potential uses of the funds. There was a suggestion of going through a public education campaign so the community could provide ideas as well. Allocation of the funds has to be completed by 2024. The money does not need to be spent by then, but a plan needs to be approved and adopted by then.

3. Communications

Nothing was reported.

4. Staff Reports

A. Engineering Report – Ms. Martin reported on the ongoing engineering and utility projects. An update was recently received regarding the North Main Street Bridge project that it will not be completed by the end of June. There have been some complaints from people who live nearby regarding the construction, but the work is still ongoing underneath the bridge. The issue is blocks need to be placed in the watercourse, which will help protect the bridge's structure from erosion. They have been unable to do the setting of the blocks using machines, so they are being brought in by hand and placed. The construction inspector is working with them on some issues. It is hoped this will only represent a month's delay in the completion time.

The road diet trial is still planned and currently, they are working on procurement of materials, working with Public Works as far as the needed signage and camera installations for observations, and working with the pavement marking contractor. This all needs to be completed as part of the layout or deployment of the road diet plan. Despite the North Main Street Bridge delay, the planning of the road diet trial is moving forward. There are no issues currently regarding the scheduling of this.

The Braeburn Culvert has been discussed for quite a while. The project has been stalled for many months. The culvert is in need of rehabilitation and a few months in from when the contractor started the project they reported the proposed rehabilitation design would not work and required redesign. The project was stalled while it was redesigned and then there was negotiation over the cost to do the modification of the design, at which point the project came to a halt. Currently, there is work being done on a contract amendment, which Corporation Counsel and an attorney for the construction company are working on.

New Park Avenue Complete Streets improvements are under design and have been under design for a few months. This will continue through most of this calendar year and will get into construction possibly in the summer of 2022.

The first of the West Hartford Drainage Studies has been completed and the second is nearly complete. The consultant has indicated the second study should be done this summer, approximately the beginning of July. The Phase II study has three sections of West Hartford, about 5% of the drainage system.

Regarding Trout Brook Trail. The state property's review board has put the maintenance agreement and easement on their agenda. This is one of the steps required to get an executed agreement. A couple of signatures have already been received. Assuming it is approved, it goes back to the DEP and they send it to the Attorney General's office for signature, which is a formality as the Office is already aware of this agreement. This impacts Trout Brook Trail Phases 5 and 6, which are from Duffield Drive on the north end down to Farmington Avenue on the southerly end of Phase 5. Phase 3 is also under design, which is from Park Road down to Jackson Avenue, which is projected to begin construction early next year.

An update was provided on the semi-diverters. The decision was reached to install the semi-diverters on Four Mile/Newport as they are currently being tested. The neighborhood was informed of this. The installations are scheduled for around August 2021. There will hopefully be a recommendation for the Riggs Avenue residents/neighborhood before the semi-diverter installation is completed on Four Mile.

B. Planning Report – Mr. Martin reported on the upcoming roadwork. There are a handful of reconstruction projects that are ongoing: Owens and Cornell Road are close to being paved, Fennbrook Road curbing and sidewalk work has been completed with the same on Princeton Street, and Ridgewood Road is beginning reconstruction. Arapahoe Road and Walbridge Road will begin after Ridgewood from Farmington to Fern Street. Beyond that, there are milling pavings scheduled for around June 29. The pavings should be completed around August 6 for the following: Lowell Road, Warrington Avenue, Fairview Street, Pheasant Chase, Fawn Brook, Quail Hollow, Farmstead Lane, Overhill Road, Mohegan Drive, Whitman Avenue, Wood Pond Road, and Oakwood Avenue.

The Farmington Avenue water main project, there is still quite a bit of work left but it will be completed by the end of the summer. This work is ongoing. There is also work going on for Oakwood Avenue for water and sewer. The Hillcrest Avenue area has been under construction. There was a meeting with the contractor to get all of Hillcrest Avenue repaved within the next couple of months, including Stevens Street. The Webster Hill area water mains, several water mains are being replaced and it is hoped to be finished before the end of this year. Four Mile Road is also undergoing water main replacement, as is Penn Drive. In the future, the New Park water main will be replaced and completed in advance of the Complete Streets Project.

Mr. Martin reported there has been one accessory dwelling unit application approved. The application was for an in-law-style unit, which was attached to the home. Mr. Dumais has

been working with a consultant on the New Park Avenue area transit-oriented development zoning issue. The initial public outreach has been completed and staff is in consultation with the consultant in developing a draft community outreach report, which should be completed by the end of June. The planning division is researching a number of zoning ordinance amendments to bring to the Council in July including philanthropic events and drive-thru facilities for restaurants.

C. Building Inspection Report – Mr. Martin reported that 940 inspections have been completed in May and of those 129 were video inspections. There were 446 permits received in May compared to 371 last year. Over 3500 phone calls have been received through the office phones in addition to 2600 phone calls on a town-designated cellphone for the month of May. Over \$190,000 in permit fees have been collected.

D. Town Manager Report – Mr. Hart provided an update on the Affordable Housing Advisory Group to assist Town staff with the preparation of the statutorily required Affordable Housing Plan and some related projects. There was a good response to the solicitation. The group has roughly 20 members of the community and the first meeting will be held on June 28, which will be an organizational meeting.

5. Future Agenda Items

Nothing was reported.

6. Adjournment

A. Meeting adjourned at 7:39 p.m.

/axb