

Village Revitalization Steering Committee

Update to June 2018 Report to York BOS 10/22/2018

Good Evening, I'm Chris Hartwell, current chair of the Village Revitalization Steering Committee. I am here to summarize our first report to the BOS.

The June 2018 report provided details on the organization and mission of our committee and on our work undertaken since the committee started in January 2017.

I plan to highlight the following areas of the report briefly tonight:

- Project Scope and Timing,
- Parking,
- Signage,
- Relocation of overhead utilities, and
- External Funding.

Project Scope

The full project scope covers roadway, sidewalk and drainage improvements on York Street from the Remick Barn to Moulton Lane and on Long Sands Road from the monument up to Woodbridge Road.

It includes realigning the intersection of York St/Long Sands Rd, repositioning the monument, standardizing sidewalks, installing street lighting, site furnishings and new landscaping. The master plan estimate for this work was \$4.0 mil.

The funding plan calls for the use of 80% Federal and 10% State transportation funds. To qualify for these funds, the town must provide the remaining 10%. The town match of \$400,000 was approved by voters in May 2016 in the form of bonds to be issued as the Federal and State funds become available.

Relationship of Timing of Funding to Project Start

"When will the project be done?" Believe me, the committee understands the public's frustration with the lack of a fixed start date.

It would be helpful to remind all of us of the key reasons the start date has been so evasive.

From the beginning of this project, the goal has been to minimize the funds needing to come directly from York taxpayers. That meant that the town would be relying mainly on Federal Highway funds to implement the work.

For a town to receive Federal highway funds in Maine, they must request them from a metropolitan planning organization. In our case this is the Kittery Area Comprehensive Transportation System or KACTS which, besides York, includes the Maine towns of Kittery, Eliot, South Berwick, and Berwick. Basically, our competition for funds.

Federal funding must have the approval of the KACTS board to be allocated to a specific highway project. These awards are based on fiscal years. Projects like York's, which exceeds KACTS' annual funding allocation, require multiple approvals.

To date, KACTS has approved three allocations to York totaling \$2.1 million. With that amount approved to date, definition and final design of a first phase of work is now underway. The earliest this first \$2.1 million would be available to the Town is late 2019, making 2020 a realistic start date.

The project will be a multiyear effort with a possible gap between the end of Phase 1 and the start of Phase 2. It could take a year (or more) beyond 2020 to secure Phase 2 funds using the KACTS funding process.

Parking

The importance of Village parking to the community, businesses and organizations continues to be taken into consideration during all aspects of project planning. Direct stakeholders and community members participated in numerous community meetings and stakeholder events.

There was general acceptance that parking changes were needed to allow room for features in the Village that would improve safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles and increase its overall attractiveness and walkability. To achieve these goals, major changes are proposed for the intersection of York Street and Long Sands Road and the wider York Street business area.

The 2014 parking studies identified 57 existing curbside parking spaces in the overall project area. About 20 of those are diagonal spaces. Diagonal parking spaces severely limit pedestrian movement, restrict sight lines at intersections and crosswalks, and increase the potential for accidents.

Although they take up less curb space, diagonal spaces extend further into the right of way, leaving even less room for amenities like sidewalks, green space, lighting, bike lanes, etc.

The York Village Master Plan seeks to rebalance the existing public right-of-way so that it serves both vehicles and pedestrians. To achieve that balance, the recommendation was to remove all curbside diagonal parking spaces in the Village Center. By eliminating diagonal spaces in favor of parallel spaces, one expects that there will be a loss in the total number of curbside spaces. The Master Plan estimated that initial loss of to be about 15 spaces.

As design and engineering work progressed, the number of “lost” spaces in some locations is being made up with proposals for new spaces in other locations within the project area. The committee agreed that these ideas should be forwarded to the traffic engineering and design team to be evaluated and incorporated where possible but, without being detrimental to the overall goals of the project.

Beyond the project scope, there is an emerging plan to expand public parking near the Village Fire Station and some spaces might also be gained near Coventry Hall on town property.

A combination of these steps could result in a potential addition of 20-30 or more spaces that would increase the total number of parking spots convenient to Village destinations.

Dean will discuss current parking ideas later.

Parking Management

The Master Plan also identified several opportunities for improving parking in the Village through better parking management. Key recommendations included:

- Better definition and identification of public parking, including current and future off-street lots;
- Boosting valuation of customer parking over long-term business parkers in prime spaces;
- Seeking new off-street parking options convenient to the Village;
- Defining loading zones with set times; and
- Defining locations for time-limited public spaces in appropriate locations.

Parking planning ideas include contacting property and business owners in the project area to conduct a parking needs survey. This needs survey will help get answers to questions such as:

- do we need one or more 15 or 30-minute parking spots?
- should we set delivery truck times and loading locations?
- and should employee parking be regulated?

Signage

The Village Master Plan suggests that a comprehensive program of informational, directional and regulatory signs be developed. Money requested for outside assistance with signage planning was not approved at the time the current design consulting contract was accepted. Signage planning will therefore be coordinated by York Public Works with inputs from the Committee and other stakeholders as needed.

This will be done in a manner that assures the preservation of the Village's historic character while also being mindful of the benefits of coherent signage to businesses and the public's safety and convenience.

Underground Utilities

In 1946, relocating overhead utility lines was recommended in a proposed plan for York Village. Likewise, the relocation of utility lines and elimination of poles in the 2015 Village Master Plan project area.

Regrettably, the initial 2015 cost estimate for doing that was twice the estimated cost for the road project. In addition, underground utility project costs do not qualify for traditional Federal or State funding and research by the committee could not identify a source of outside funding. There continued to be support for something to be done about overhead utilities in the Village.

The design team has been asked to seek information from the utility companies which is needed to develop detailed costs for two options:

1. Move current overhead utilities below ground within the right of way in a limited portion of the project area while retaining existing overhead utilities elsewhere; and
2. Install conduit throughout the project area while the Village project streets are being reconstructed to allow the town the potential to relocate utilities at a future date without tearing up these streets again.

More information on this and a Request for Action will be presented later this evening by DPW Director Dean Lessard.

Defining the Priority Utility Project Areas [Omitted from Live Presentation]

In February 2018, the committee undertook a site walk to help us define a priority area within the overall project that, given a reasonable cost estimate, would have the biggest impact from relocating utilities underground.

We walked the area and recorded a rating for each pole. First, for its overall impact on scenic view and second, for its perceived impact on plan design, signage, foliage, pedestrian flow, and cost. After completing that exercise, four groupings of poles were identified and prioritized. The ranking was sent to the consultants and is included in the BOS packet tonight.

External Funding Requirements

There are two project segments that will require outside funding if undertaken. One is the underground utilities plan discussed already. The second is for some level of desired street amenity costs beyond what can be achieved within the available traditional project funding.

It is anticipated that supplementary funding will be sought for such things as tree plantings, landscaping, lighting, and street furnishings. Multiple funding sources have been identified and will be addressed once we there is clarity on the overall project schedule and a completed landscape design and funding goal is in hand.

Summary

Over the next 12-18 months, our committee's will include:

- Pursuing a viable option regarding relocating overhead utilities underground;
- Finetuning curbside parking spaces to be included in the final project design plan;
- Parking management planning including a parking needs survey in consultation with the Board of Selectmen;
- Instituting short term signage improvements; and
- Identifying outside funding sources for street amenities in preparation pursuing grants or private donations.

For more detail on the above topics, I refer you to the full report. A copy can be found on our website, YorkVillage.org. We will continue to keep the BOS and the community up to date on activities and welcome your inputs.

Thank you. If you have any questions for me, I would be happy to address them if I can.

Christine Hartwell, Chair