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Planning - Zoning - Economic Development - Conservation

MERRIMACK BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN MASTER PLAN WORK GROUP

DRAFT MINUTES

Tuesday, March 10, 2015

Planning Board Members Present: Desirea Falt, Alastair Millns and Nelson Disco.

Others Present: Assistant Planner Donna Pohli.

1. Call to Order.

Desirea Falt called the Merrimack Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Work Group (Group) meeting to order at 7:32 pm in the Matthew Thornton Meeting Room.

2. Bike Ped Task List Reporting.

Desirea, Donna, and Nelson recapped the March 5, 2015 meeting with the Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager. They explained the four major topics discussed were doing the master plan for D.W. Highway and having NRPC assist with the process, obtaining legal counsel about payment-in-lieu and maintenance, completing town-wide master plan eventually, and creating a capital reserve fund which is a topic tabled until after the master plan is in place. The Group discussed going before the Town Council and decided that April 23rd, 2015 was the preferred date. Alastair and Nelson expressed that they would be willing to read over Desirea's proposed presentation ahead of time. The Group decided to focus on presenting the NRPC proposal and to only give a sentence or two summary of the overall goals of the Group. The Group also agreed to speak to the logical points and facts and to bring some of the data from the Merrimack Forum so some of the residents opinions can be represented.

3. Walk-ability / Bike-ability Assessment Planning.

At the request of Desirea, Donna passed out the "Guide to Conducting Walkability and Bikeability Assessments in New Hampshire Communities" written by Nik Coates of HEAL NH. Desirea explained that she, Nelson, and Donna attended a training based on this document which included doing an assessment walking tour in Concord. She feels it is a good document to follow when the Group begins the field assessment process. The Group briefly went through the document and discussed the process it outlines including examples of common concerns. Desirea explained that this is a survey that the Group can use with residents during the assessment process and that some questions are already drafted. Nelson pointed out that the assessment areas must be narrow since part of DW may be rated completely different than others. Once the assessment process begins, Desirea would like the "Guide to Conducting Walkability and Bikeability Assessments…" document on the website. The Group decided to revisit this topic at the April or May meeting and to then start the field work this Spring/Summer (after meeting with the Town Council regarding the NRPC scope).

4. Other Items of Concern.

The Group discussed the presentation to Town Council and how it should focus on the NRPC proposal which does not require any additional funding. The Group decided to use logical,

sound reasoning such as specific ways to improve safety, who would use these sidewalks, and how DOT will not approve any sidewalks in their part of DW Highway until a plan is in place. The Group would like to put together surveys to determine priority areas to focus the assessments on. NRPC will also provide the assistance outlined in the project scope. After analyzing the survey results, the Group can go back to the Town Council and discuss the bigger picture/town wide master plan. But this first meeting should include one or two sentences of future goals and then to focus on the NRPC scope. Nelson agreed the Group should explain what it plans to do in the future but that it wants to focus on areas of real safety concern. When asked for clarification on what priority areas, the Group is considering looking for, Nelson explained he meant priority areas throughout town but beginning with D.W. Highway. The Group recalled that DOT prevents the Planning Board and the applicants from adding sidewalks in their jurisdictional areas of D.W. Highway without a plan in place. Desirea will put together a draft presentation/speech to have the Group look over before the April 23rd Town Council meeting by the end of the week.

Nelson did an initial evaluation from the responses on the Merrimack Forum on Facebook. He concluded that the respondents were comprised of approximately 50% oppose vs. 50% support bike/ped infrastructure in town. He reported that regarding the last question posed by Bob and as of the beginning of the week, 12 people were in favor, 10 people were opposed and it was unclear on how 3 people stood. Suggestions such as being able to walk to coffee shops, the library, Whittier Road, having a 2 mile trip to the new Shaw's area, and linking current recreational areas to sidewalks, etc. were discussed along with adding bicycle amenities to the master plan. Motorized scooters were also brought up on the Merrimack Forum discussion.

The Group then drafted questions they would like to pose to legal counsel now that the Group has received permission from the Town Manager. The questions include:

1.) How can Merrimack use a system like Nashua's where payment in lieu funds can be collected but then used in a different area (still within the quadrant system but not directly at the property)?
2.) Does this method described in Question 1 satisfy the law?
3.) Who has the authority to determine that enough money is in the fund to build a sidewalk? Is it possible to spend this money without having to go to Town Council each time?
4.) What is the rule that allows other Town's not to clear the sidewalk? Is it possible to require that some sidewalks in town must be cleared, but others don't have to be and have an inventory of those sidewalks?
5.) How does Question 4 comply with ADA law?
6.) Can you provide us any further information on maintenance and liability?

Nelson would prefer to have a meeting with legal counsel to have a discussion. Donna will ask Bob if he has any questions to add before forwarding the questions on. The Group also discussed the need to know how much money to charge for payment in lieu depending on the frontage length.

5. Minutes—January 13, 2015.

The minutes from the February 24, 2015 meeting were approved, with one change, by a vote of 3-0-0 on a motion made by Alastair Millns and seconded by Nelson Disco.

6. Adjourn.

The March 10, 2015 meeting of the Merrimack Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Work Group was adjourned at 8:21 PM, by a vote of 3-0-0 on a motion made by Nelson Disco and seconded by Alastair Millns.

The next meeting of the Merrimack Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Work Group will be April 28th at 7:30 PM in the Matthew Thornton Meeting Room.

Task List:

1. Staff to confirm NRPC proposal with timeline (from 2.24.15 meeting but waiting until after 4.23.15 Council Meeting).
2. All members to bring community input questions to the next Meeting. (from 2.24.15 meeting but tabled until May meeting).
3. Desirea to create a committee description to go online (from 2.24.15 meeting).
4. Staff to create minutes from 3.5.15 meeting with Town Managers with items discussed and outcome of the meeting (from 3.10.15 meeting).
5. Desirea to send draft presentation/speech to group for feedback before 4.23.15 Council Meeting Presentation (from 3.10.15 meeting).
6. Staff to post HEAL's walkability assessment document to the website, when the assessment process begins (from 3.10.2015 meeting).
7. Staff to get Bike/Ped Group placed on Council's 4/23/15 agenda (from 3.10.15 meeting).
8. Donna to reserve room for 4.28.15 and 5.26.15 Bike/Ped meetings (from 3.10.15 meeting).
9. Bike/Ped Members and Staff to present to Council on 4.23.15 (from 3.10.15 meeting).
10. Staff to ask Legal Counsel questions about payment-in-lieu and maintenance/liability after Donna emails Bob for additional questions (from 3.10.15 meeting).